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ETHEL CHURCHILL:

OR,

THE TWO BRIDES.

VOL. I.

LATELY PUBLISHED, BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

In One Volume, Price 7*s.* 6*d.* bound,

TRAITS AND TRIALS

OF

EARLY LIFE.

The Contents are all touching, picturesque, delightful, and instructive.—*Literary Gazette.*

ETHEL CHURCHILL:

OR,

THE TWO BRIDES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE IMPROVVISATRICE," "FRANCESCA CARRARA,"

"TRAITS AND TRIALS OF EARLY LIFE,"

ETC. ETC.

"Yet knowing something — dimly though it be;
And, therefore, still more awful — of that strange
And most tumultuous thing, the heart of man.
It chanceth oft that, mix'd with nature's smiles,
My soul beholds a solemn quietness
That almost looks like grief, as if on earth
There were no perfect joy, and happiness —
Still trembled on the brink of misery." — WILSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THE LADY EMMELINE STUART WORTLEY.

DEAR MADAM,

I VENTURE TO INSCRIBE THESE VOLUMES WITH YOUR NAME. IT IS, I OWN, A SELFISH PLEASURE, FOR IT ALLOWS ME TO EXPRESS THE ADMIRATION AND GRATITUDE OF

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S OFTEN OBLIGED

L. E. L.

PREFACE.

THERE is one portion of a Work which, more than all others, marks the difference between the reader and the writer. It is the first read, and the last written; the one which the reader dismisses the most hastily, and the writer lingers upon longest. The Preface is the seal of separation between yourself and a Work that must have been the chief object of many days. The excitement of composition is over, and you begin to doubt and to despond. I cannot understand a writer growing indifferent from custom or success. Every new Work must be the record of much change in the mind which produces it, and there is always the anxiety to know how such change will be received. It is impossible, also, for the feeling of your own moral responsibility not to increase. At first you write eagerly, composition is rather a passion than a power; but, as you go on, you cannot but find that, to write a book, is a far more serious charge than it at first appeared. Faults have been pointed out, and you are desirous of avoiding their recurrence; praise has been be-

stowed, and you cannot but wish to shew that it has not been given in vain.

Encouragement is the deepest and dearest debt that a writer can incur. Moreover, you have learnt that opinions are not to be lightly put forth, when there is even a chance of such opinions being material wherewith others will form their own. I never saw any one reading a volume of mine without almost a sensation of fear. I write every day more earnestly, and more seriously. To shew the necessity of a strong and guiding principle; to put in the strongest light, that no vanity, no pleasure, can ever supply the place of affection; to soften and to elevate,—has been the object of the following pages. I know too well that I cannot work out my own ideal, but I deeply feel that it is the beautiful and the true.

The greater part of these volumes has been written when in very wretched health;—may I urge it as a plea for the continuance of that kindly indulgence which has so often excited both my hope and my gratitude?

ETHEL CHURCHILL.

CHAPTER I.

AGE AND YOUTH.

" I tell thee," said the old man, " what is life.
A gulf of troubled waters — where the soul,
Like a vexed bark, is tossed upon the waves,
Of pain and pleasure, by the wavering breath
Of passions. They are winds that drive it on,
But only to destruction and despair.
Methinks that we have known some former state
More glorious than our present; and the heart
Is haunted by dim memories — shadows left
By past felicity. Hence do we pine
For vain aspirings — hopes that fill the eyes
With bitter tears for their own vanity.
Are we then fallen from some lovely star,
Whose consciousness is as an unknown curse?"

" AND yet, you chose to marry him!"

" I did, and should marry him again; but bear with me for this night, dearest uncle, as you have often borne."

The old man's answer was to pass his hand caressingly over the beautiful head that rested on the arm of his chair; and his niece continued.

"My spirits are overcast with a sadness which I have not hitherto known, and inexplicable too. Did I believe in omens, I should say that my depression was ominous."

"It is the idea of departure—but you always wished to visit London."

"And wish it still; but I knew not, up to the hour of parting, how much it would cost me to sever myself from my kind, my only friend."

"You have your husband, Henrietta;" but the expression which accompanied the sentence was half sarcastic, half distrustful.

A still deeper shade of doubt passed across the high and finely cast features of the youthful female.

"You have, from my cradle, impressed upon me the folly of love; and so far as my knowledge goes, it goes with you. All the affairs of the heart that I have witnessed, have excited but my wonder or contempt; nor could I ever understand what people see so charming in each other. I could no more pass hours away, like dear Ethel,

in imagining perfection in a nameless boy, than I could yield up all my faculties to the arrangement of colours in an endless Penelope-pleasing piece of embroidery; perhaps I am too quick-sighted for the delusions of love."

"Be your eyes never dimmed then," said the listener bitterly.

"Yet, if I put love out of the question, I could wish for something like affection; for, much as it accords with Hamlet, and with usage, to be 'a little more than kin, and less than kind,' still, Lord Marchmont's coldness oftentimes comes over me with the effect of suddenly rounding a headland in one of our valleys, and finding the north wind full in my face. He takes not the slightest interest in aught I say, and I have continually thoughts and feelings which I am restless to communicate. Here I do feel not this"—and she turned towards him her glistening eyes—"for my own dear uncle will always hearken to me, explain, encourage, and shew me how to comprehend others and myself. But, far away from him, surrounded by new scenes, filled with fresh impressions, longing to clothe in utterance all the bursting thoughts they will excite, must I be

lastingly condemned to a silent life, and a closed heart."

"Better keep them so for ever. Wherefore unlock to others treasures priceless to yourself, and valueless to them, unless the disclosure serve to render you their dupe and victim."

"How differently, my uncle, do we view the world!"

"The difference lies but in knowledge. I know that world—you know it not."

"Nay, I have learned it from yourself, and experience teaches well."

"Ay; but before we profit, the experience must be our own. A few short years, Henrietta! for, to a temper such as yours, life gives its lessons quickly; and we shall think but too much alike. I may not live to see it, but the time must come—and, ah! how soon—when you will commune with yourself in the solitude, perhaps, of this very chamber, and admit, 'gloomy as were my uncle's views of existence, the reality is yet more dark.'"

"Oh, no! Fate cannot but have made an exception in my favour. Is there a single advantage that Fortune has not blest me with—young, high-born, married to one of England's

richest and proudest peers, handsome, clever — is it not so? At morn I shall go hence, and, what short of triumph and pleasure can I anticipate in the metropolis?"

"And you will find both; but, alas! human enjoyment is all too dearly atoned. The ancients gave the balance of life to a dark goddess, who, following in the track of fortune, as the shadow follows the sunshine, enforces bitter payment for our few and transitory delights. Nothing is good, but evil comes thereof. I took you, Henrietta, when an infant, from your dying mother's arms. Your cradle was placed in my laboratory; and often have I closed the midnight volume, to watch the fitful slumbers of your childhood. I have since given you all I had to give, my time, my knowledge; and for your sake loved on — hoped on. And now, that you are my sweet and intelligent companion, and my whole heart is bound up in you — your smile my all of sunshine, your step my only music — you must leave me; and to a solitude, saddened by the remembrance of a beloved one, who never more can be what she has been to its lonely and weary occupant."

The young countess sprang from her seat, and threw herself at the old man's knees, which she fondly clasped.

"No, no, my more, my more dear, than father, I will not leave you. How vain, how selfish have I been! Why did you suffer me to marry—nay, what is Lord Marchmont to me? I will stay here happy, ah, too happy, in devoting all life to the debt of gratitude—nay, not gratitude, of love—that I owe to you."

Sir Jasper struggled for a moment,—'twas only for a moment—and the strong emotion was subdued.

"Not thus, my sweet child; the laws of Nature are immutable; and they have decreed that the young bird shall leave the nest. Do not weep, my beloved girl: of what avail were it to keep you here until your loveliness and youth had departed. Even with your gladdening presence, I cannot now number many years; and to feel that I was leaving you lonely and defenceless — unpractised, too, in that world which requires all youth's energies to encounter—would embitter even the pang of death! No—my best beloved Henrietta—I would have you

form new ties, and other friends. The rare advantages of youth pass rapidly away, and my darling must enjoy them while she may. Her old uncle will not be forgotten. You will write to me often; and I shall still feel and think with you:" and, bending down, he kissed the sweet eyes that were looking up at him with such sad tenderness.

For a long time they sat in unbroken silence, and neither looked upon the other. Each gazed at the surrounding objects, and alike beheld them not. They saw but with the heart's eyes, and these turn on an inward world.

There are in existence two periods when we shrink from any great vicissitude—early youth and old age. In the middle of life, we are indifferent to change; for we have discovered that nothing is, in the end, so good or so bad as it at first appeared. We know, moreover, how to accommodate ourselves to circumstances; and enough of exertion is still left in us to cope with the event.

But age is heart-wearied and tempest-torn: it is the crumbling cenotaph of fear and hope! Wherefore should there be turmoil for the few,

and evening hours, when all they covet is repose? They see their shadow fall upon the grave; and need but to be at rest beneath!

Youth is not less averse from change; but that is from exaggeration of its consequences, for all seems to the young so important, and so fatal. They are timid, because they know not what they fear; hopeful, because they know not what they expect. Despite their gaiety of confidence, they yet dread the first plunge into life's unfathomed deep.

Thus was it with Henrietta. She knew more of the world than most women of her years; for her converse had been chiefly with her uncle, a man of remarkable endowments: and she had read an infinite variety of books—read them, too, with that quick perception which seizes motive and meaning with intuitive accuracy.

Such, however, inevitably is half knowledge; and theory that lacks the correction of practice, is as the soul without the body.

In common with all of her impassioned temper, and sensitive feelings, she had much imagination. She had created a world which she was resolved to realise—a world where beauty was power,

whose luxuries were poetry, and to whose triumphs she gave all the brilliant colouring of hope. Who, in after life, can help smiling at the fancies in which early anticipation revelled; how absurd, how impossible, do they not now appear! Yet, in such mockery lurks much of bitterness: the laugh rings hollow from many a disappointment, and many a mortification.

Henrietta had all this to acquire, and was taking on that very evening one of her first lessons in experience. Contrary to their wont, her wishes were at variance with themselves — the past and the future contended in her. Impatient to enter the "new more magnificent world," on whose threshold she now stood, she was yet withheld by all the tenderest recollections of her childhood. She could not brook the thought of abandoning her uncle, as his long and gloomy evenings arose sadly before her — she saw him wandering all solitary through their favourite walks — sitting down to his lonely meals — watching by himself the dim hearth, and thinking continually of her. She raised not her eyes, but every object was distinctly visible to them,

and woke a train of association which gave her the keenest pain. Never had the place seemed to her so gloomy; and all therein was so characteristic of its master.

It was a large vaulted apartment, and had been once a chapel; but it was now half library, half laboratory. The arches were formed of black oak, hewn into all the fantastic shapes of Gothic imaginings; in which it was singular to note that all the natural imitations were graceful, while those of humanity were hideous. The oak-leaf and the garland mingled grotesquely with the distorted faces, that ever and anon peeped from among their wreaths.

The walls were entirely hidden by book-shelves, or by cases containing rare specimens of fossil bones and reptile skeletons. Here was a grisly crocodile, its teeth white and sharp as when they glistened in the waters of the Nile; there, a massy serpent, knotted into huge and hideous contortions; while myriads of small snakes, lizards, and disgusting insects, were stored around, with a care which had obtained for Sir Jasper Meredith, among his neighbours, the reputation of a

magician, though they were but the sickly fancies of a heart ill at ease, that mocked itself in its pursuits.

The ceiling had been painted with the martyrdom of some saint. Who shall place a bound to human folly, when both the inflicter and the endurer of torture have deemed that pain is acceptable in the sight of God? The tints had long since faded from the ceiling, and in the twilight nothing was discernible save two or three wild and ghastly faces, far less like "spirits of health," than "goblins damned!"

On the carpet, at the hearth, basked, in a wood-fire's heat, three enormous and black cats, the predilection for which, instead of for dogs, the usually chosen companions of country gentlemen, further increased the belief in Sir Jasper's unholy studies.

The reason given for this preference, was tinctured with the same morbid perversity that had its source in early disappointment.

"I like a cat," he would say, "because it does not disguise its selfishness with any flattering hypocrisies. Its attachment is not to yourself, but to your house. Let it but have food, and

a warm lair among the embers, and it heeds not at whose expense. Then it has the spirit to resent aggression. You shall beat your dog, and he will fawn upon you; but a cat never forgives: it has no tender mercies, and it torments before it destroys its prey."

The landscape from the oriel window, in which they were now seated, was quite in accordance with Sir Jasper's professed tastes.

It fronted the bleakest part of the coast, a desolate heath, which was relieved only by a few stunted trees, and became gradually merged in the sands. An undulating purple line, which was "earth's great antagonist," the sea, closed the distance.

On the horizon rested heavy masses of cloud, broken by red gleams of dying sunset, which, as its vivid colours parted the darkening vapours but to disappear, shewed like some gallant spirit struggling vainly with the pressure of adversity, and yielding one energy after another, as it sank beneath some last misfortune, heavier than all before.

As yet, the crimson hues flitted around, rendering distinct first one object and then another.

They settled now upon the two that watched them from that oriel window.

The aged man was leaning back in a quaintly embossed oaken chair, on whose carving the arms of his family were gorgeously painted and inlaid. In youth he must have been singularly handsome, but years and care had left their vestiges on his noble features, which were thin even to emaciation. You might almost see the veins flow under the sunken temples. Scarcely a hue of life hovered on that wan cheek and lip, and his extreme paleness was heightened by a profusion of black hair, from whence time had not taken a shade or curl. Contrary to the fashion of his time, it drooped upon his shoulders, like a pall falling round the white face of a corpse.

On a low cushion beside sat his niece, at once a likeness and a contrast. Their resemblance was striking,—there was the identical outline,—though age had lost the glowing tints of youth. Both had the same mass of black hair, the high intellectual forehead, the strongly marked brow, the slightly aquiline nose; but, above all, there was the same expression, an inward and melancholy look, whenever their features were in

repose. It was a similitude that every year would increase, for it was the similitude of character.

Henrietta's was a style of beauty uncommon in England, a bright and sunny brunette, the soft brown of whose skin was warmed by the richest crimson that ever flushed a cheek with a whole summer of roses, while her lip was of scarlet—the dewy coral has its freshness, but conveys not its brightness. Her hair floated unbound in long soft tresses, and her tall figure was almost concealed by a white damask robe, fastened loosely at the waist, but leaving that graceful outline which reveals the most exquisite proportion!

No wonder that the old man's eye dwelt upon her with mingled pride and tenderness; yet was it a face that might cause affection many an anxious hour, for there was mind in the lofty and clear forehead, heart in the warm and flushed cheek,—and what are mind and heart to woman, but fairy gifts, for whose possession a grievous price will be exacted.

Suddenly her uncle rose from his seat, exclaiming, "We are over sad and silent. I will go seek the gift, reserved by me for our parting. No duchess in the court of St. James's shall rival

the Lady Marchmont in diamonds, at least,—and you, Henrietta, will have to make no sacrifice for their enjoyment."

The youthful countess was gratified by display, for, to the imaginative, it bears a charm, of which a more staid temperament dreams not. Yet, at that moment, she felt as if the acquisition of these gems were a calamity. Their possession involved separation from her uncle, from every relic of home affections, and from all that yet lingered with her of her childhood.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORALITY OF DIAMONDS.

There was an evil in Pandora's box
Beyond all other ones, yet it came forth
In guise so lovely, that men crowded round
And sought it as the dearest of all treasure.
Then were they stung with madness and despair:
High minds were bowed in abject misery.
The hero trampled on his laurell'd crown,
While genius broke the lute it waked no more.
Young maidens, with pale cheeks, and faded eyes,
Wept till they died. Then there were broken hearts—
Insanity and Jealousy, that feeds
Unto satiety, yet loathes its food;
Suicide digging its own grave; and Hate,
Unquenchable and deadly; and Remorse—
The vulture feeding on its own life-blood.
The evil's name was Love—these curses seem
His followers for ever.

Sir Jasper re-entered, bearing a crimson velvet casket, and broidered with armorial bearings.

"It is getting dark and cold," said he; "let us draw to the fire."

Henrietta rang for the attendants to draw in the ponderous curtains; and in the meanwhile, curious to behold the stores of the emblazoned depository, lighted the tapers for herself. The case was speedily unclasped, and the countess stood dazzled with the brilliancy of the precious contents. She hastily took thence the bracelets, and fastened them upon an arm round and polished as of marble, then gathered up her night-black hair into the lustrous coronet, and ran to a mirror, which, though dim with time and use, grew radiant with these shining gems.

"My dear, good uncle," she cried, "you are too kind, too generous."

"Giving you your own, is no generosity," returned Sir Jasper: "these are the jewels of your house—the portion of its heiress."

"I am glad," said Henrietta, a flush of pride deepening the bloom upon her cheek, "that they have been ours; I am glad to associate their brightness with the past. Fresh from the merchant, they convey no sentiment but that of wealth; while these hereditary diamonds recall whole generations of stately beauty. I rejoice that they have descended with our line."

"So do not I," said her uncle, in a low and altered tone. "I see in those glittering trinkets the departure of youth and of love, the wreck of the heart's best hopes and sweetest affections. To me they are mocking records of the past. As they fling back the taper's rays, they seem to boast,—'The heart was a game between us; you risked upon it passion, truth, belief, but we won the stake.'"

He sank back in his arm-chair, and riveted his gaze upon one of the portraits which hung on the gloomy walls. Almost unwittingly, Henrietta pursued the motion of his eyes, which rested intensely upon a picture that displayed herself, as a child of three years, her father, and her mother.

In Sir Henry Meredith's appearance there was nothing that won upon the sight, though the limner had done his best for him. The countenance had no character. But his consort was indeed lovely, like, and yet not like, the daughter who now watched her. There was the same rich complexion, although the features were of less perfect contour, the forehead more narrow, and the face devoid of the meaning which mind,

and mind only, can impart. But this the passing observer might scarcely have detected, for few would seek beyond that exceeding loveliness.

"She is very beautiful," sighed Sir Jasper; "to me was that face once the fairest of the Almighty's works. I loved, as they love who love but once. At parting from her, I have flung me on the ground along which her light feet had skimmed, to gather the common wild flowers that they could not crush. The casual mention of her name was to my ear heaven's sweetest melody; and, if only for her sake, I believed in truth, and constancy, and goodness! I have felt sick with happiness when she has entered the room suddenly, and have trembled like an infant, when I but fancied I read anger in her averted eyes.

"Lady Agnes was my cousin; and in birth, youth, and affection, we were a fitting match: but we were poor. The world was, however, before us, and of what was I not capable for her love! I was strengthened even to parting from her, and we parted!—parted, with the fixed stars above, whose light was less lovely than her tears. Of the two, she was apparently the more sorrowful; for I subdued my sadness, that it might not

enhance her suffering. She called me back to her, to give me one of those long black locks which, if but blown against my cheek, as we rambled together, made my whole frame shiver with delicious transport! I have now a raven curl, severed from her graceful brow, but it is not the same.

"Well, I forthwith went abroad, and joined my brother, who had for some years past resided at Vienna. My heart was too full, too young for silence, and I told him all. He heard me calmly; and as calmly promised to further our attachment. The implicitness of my reliance stayed not to ask his sympathy. To talk of her was happiness, and my brother seemed a part of that home whither he was then returning.

"What desolation was in his departure! for the first time I had to struggle against the world alone. Fortunately, from the absence of some, and illness of others, who were attached with me to the embassy, there was much to distract me from my dejection, for my official duties had become of unusual severity. I was even happy then, for I was employed, and had motive for employment. I lived in the future, — that future

which I fashioned to my will. I have since tried occupation as a resource, and how different was it when sweetened by the projects of hope! A year passed rapidly away, and I could look sanguinely forward to a successful career. Intrusted, at length, with a mission to England, whose completion would give me a few days at Meredith Place, I planned to come upon them by surprise.

"How well I remember the evening that saw my return on that old domain! The same soft twilight pervaded Nature as when I left it—not a shadow of change had passed over the old house and its grounds. The oaks, though scarcely yet in leaf, flung down their giant shadows, and the dew rested beneath their shelter. The hawthorn's breath came upon the gale as sweetly as of yore; and the wind, as it scattered the green blossoms which our young peasantry call "locks and keys," made the same rustling in the ashen boughs.

"I walked on alone, for my grooms had gone round with the horses. After a moment's pause to breathe—for the sense of present happiness was too much—I stood beside the little stream whereon her shadow was imprinted when we bade farewell; and fancied that, like my heart, it too

should have retained that dark outline as faithfully as it mirrored the stars, which were flickering in the flood even as I saw them then.

"When nearer the house, however, there came upon me signs of change;—I heard the roll of carriages and the sound of music. Suddenly a stream of light burst from the windows. I must have arrived at the moment of some festive celebration;—fortunate, for Agnes would assuredly be there.

"To place this beyond doubt, ere I withdrew to change my dress, I entered the vestibule unperceived, and made my way to the musician's gallery, from which I could look down upon the scene below. All was gaiety and animation; brilliant groups were flitting past in rapid succession; but my attention was at once attracted to the head of the room, where was stationed a lady in white satin, to whom my brother was presenting every guest successively.

"I could hear the musicians applaud among themselves the beauty of the bride, who at that moment turned her head towards the gallery: I felt upon whom I should look—it was the face of Agnes!

"Henrietta, I watched her more unmovedly than I now tell you of that watching! The beauteous head, from whose dark ringlets came the one yet next my heart, was bound with these very diamonds; and the eyes that I had last seen so sad and tearful, were now full of light.

"The sound of her silvery laughter came where I stood, as, resting on my brother's arm, she paced along the room. At once I darted from the gallery and forsook my father's house, and neither saw it nor England for many long years. It matters not how those years went by; suffice it, that my heart at length yearned within me to behold my native land again. Experience had taught me, that woman's falsehood was no unparalleled marvel; but it had coupled with this conviction, that nothing in after life can atone for the bitterness of our first rude awakening.

"I returned, hardly knowing wherefore, to Meredith Place—as if the scenes of youth could recall our youth again! they only make us feel the more acutely how far it is removed.

"On my arrival I met, winding darkly along the great avenue, my brother's funeral train.

I saw the soft blossoms of the hawthorn mingle with the black plumes of the hearse.

"Confusion was upon all things. Creditors were clamouring aloud in the house of the widow and the fatherless; and in the very hall through which a coffin had late passed, were heard the jingling of glasses and the rattle of the dice-box.

"To my inquiries concerning Lady Meredith, the domestics abruptly replied, that 'she was very ill, in her own chamber.' 'Ay, take my word, she will never leave it without being carried,' muttered an old woman, unfeelingly, as she hobbled slowly onward, with strength and temper alike exhausted by attendance on the invalid.

"I bade this person go, and demand if Lady Meredith could receive her brother-in-law; for, painful as our interview might be, it was indispensable. Meantime I stood apart in a recess, loathing the scene on which I was compelled to look: it was another leaf in the dark history of man's selfishness and ingratitude.

"Sir Henry had consumed his substance in ostentation and riotous hospitality—had fed many at his board, made many merry in his halls, but not a friend was in his house of mourning; the

very retainers who had grown rich upon his ruin, seemed to deem the burial of their master but a signal for carousing and license. The old woman soon returned, bringing word that ‘ her ladyship would be glad to see me.’ What mockery in such a message! Though my way was through many well-known chambers, I recognised not one. My sight was deadened to external things: I was absorbed by a troubled and vague picture—the coming interview.

“ ‘ This is my lady’s room,’ said my decrepit guide. Even in that hour, what first occurred to me was surprise that the lady of our noble mansion should have chosen for her abode one of its smallest and worst apartments. All bore an air of discomfort. Though the evenings were still chilly, no fire was upon the hearth, which was strewed only with yesterday’s gray and mouldering ashes: night was fast closing in, and the curtains were as yet undrawn, while the half daylight made the single still glimmering candle yet more faint.

“ I approached the bed, and all else was forgotten. There was stretched, pale, worn, and

changed, beyond what I had even dreamed of change, she whose image was still treasured in my heart so fair and so bright. Years, long years of care, had borne heavily on those sunken temples, and on those pallid features.

" She perceived me instantly, and feebly extended her hand, but her words died in the utterance. I kissed her cold and wasted fingers, and bent in silence over her.

" A little creature was already kneeling there, but I yet saw nothing beyond the strange and hollow eyes which gazed upon me, as if in entreaty. Though altered and dim, I could still read their wishes. She then pointed to a restorative medicine which stood near; and, young as you were, Henrietta, you marked the sign, and, pouring a few drops into a cup, brought it towards the couch. Not tall enough to reach her mouth, you gave the cup gently into my hands—and your parent's weary head was upheld by my arm to take it from me, but she had no longer the power to swallow. By the help of a chair, you had now clambered up among the pillows, and were trying if she would drink it at your offer.

Something in the face suddenly struck you as unaccustomed, for you were terrified, and looked imploringly towards me for aid.

"I turned to the aged nurse, but she was lying back in a deep-cushioned easy chair, overpowered with weariness and heavy sleep.

"Again Lady Meredith raised her head from the pillow, and a sudden and unnatural light flashed from her drooping eye-lids.

"'I know you, Jasper,' said she, in a faint and sepulchral voice. 'It had been hard for me to die without your forgiveness. You are looking kindly and sadly on me: look ever thus, I pray you, on my poor and orphan child, who can claim no friend upon the earth, except yourself.' I raised you, pale, pretty creature that you were, from the bed, and you clung about my neck. 'Yes, she will love you!' murmured the sufferer, yet more feebly; and, at the next effort to ejaculate, her accents died away with a frightful gurgling in the throat.

"She stretched her hands convulsively—a rapid change passed over her features—I looked upon the face of the dead!"

The silence which ensued at the close of this narrative, was broken by Sir Jasper's remark: "Well, my poor Henrietta, the mother more than atoned for all, when she bequeathed to me the daughter. But human nature is, at the best, but selfish: I looked forward to your alliance with Lord Marchmont as the realisation of my dearest wishes. You are married; and I shrink from your alienation from me. I dread to commit my treasure to a callous, cruel world. But, good night, love, for we must arise with the dawn, and I am weary—most weary; to morrow, I shall be in better spirits."

He kissed her, and they parted for the night.

CHAPTER III.

ANTICIPATION.

We do not know how much we love,
  Until we come to leave;
An aged tree, a common flower,
  Are things o'er which we grieve.
There is a pleasure in the pain
That brings us back the past again.

We linger while we turn away,
  We cling while we depart;
And memories, unmarked till then,
  Come crowding on the heart.
Let what will lure our onward way,
Farewell's a bitter word to say.

The moon was shining full into Lady Marchmont's window, and a soft western breeze was stirring the branches at the yet open casement. The aspect on this side the dwelling was as wooded and fertile, as on the other it was bare and barren. To the left, towered an ancient

avenue of oaks; to the right, a pleasure-ground was carried aslope towards the park.

> "Still and so beautiful was that fair night,
> It might have calmed the gay amid their mirth,
> And given the wretched a delight in tears."

But Lady Marchmont's feelings were not in unison with the scene; she was excited and restless, needed to talk, and not to think—in a word, to be taken out of herself.

The objects around were wearisomely familiar; they recalled too much for one, who wished rather to hope than to repine! Henrietta's temper was too sudden and quick for melancholy; she was impatient of her own regret, and strove to dissipate rather than indulge the mood.

At that moment it struck eight o'clock. The church-spire, touched by the moonbeams, shone above the aged yews that stood in a heavy group below. The chime struck Lady Marchmont's musing into another vein.

"How early," thought she, "and Algernon will not be at home for many hours. I might go and visit Ethel: to-morrow I shall have little leisure." She threw a mantle hastily around her,

and, drawing its hood above her head, descended to the garden. As she ever and anon passed by some shrub herself had planted, or neared some covert bower where she had whiled away the listless hours, she would half pause, and again would urge her pace hurriedly onward.

She had now reached the churchyard, which few of her age and time would have traversed with her indifference. She ran across it, as the shortest route to Mrs. Churchill's grounds; and Mrs. Churchill was the grandmother with whom Ethel dwelt.

A little wicket opened into a half-wilderness, half-shrubbery, whose narrow pathway was chequered by the soft light that found its way through the densely-grown plantation. As she turned to secure the latchet, the voice of music came upon her ear. "Ah!" said she, and a conscious blush lit up her cheek; "Walter Maynard is then with them." The sound of her own half whisper seemed to startle herself, and she passed on with a haughty smile, but hesitating step. "And Norbourne Courtenaye, doubtless;" but this name was spoken without embarrassment, and aloud.

Another instant, and the music ended; the leafy screen was divided, and she was the centre of the little company, every one of whom rejoiced to welcome her. She seated herself by Ethel; and declaring that her walk had left her no breath as yet to talk, urged them to resume the harmony that she had interrupted. All were too young, and too intimate, for the embarrassment of ceremony, and again music broke on the stillness of the night.

It was an old English air, to which the vocalists had set the words of a sonnet, written by Walter Maynard. The words of the song were sad: but what is the young poet's melancholy, but prophecy?

Dream no more of that sweet time
  When the heart and cheek were young;
Dream no more of that sweet time
  Ere the veil from life was flung.
Yet the cheek retains the rose
  Which its beauty had of yore,
But the bloom upon the heart
          Is no more.

We have mingled with the false,
  Till belief has lost the charm
Which it had when hope was new!
  And the pulse of feeling warm.

We have had the bosom wrung
 By the mask which friendship wore;
Affection's trusting happiness
 Is no more.

We have seen the young and gay
 Dying as the aged die;
Miss we not the laughing voice,
 Miss we not the laughing eye?
Wishes take the place of hope,
 We have dreamed till faith is o'er;
Its freshness made life fair, and that
 Is no more.

Take away yon sparkling bowl—
 What is left to greet it now?
Loathing lip that turns away;
 Downcast eye and weary brow.
Hopes and joys that wont to smile,
 Mirth that lit its purple store;
Friends that wont to join the pledge,
 Are no more.

The scene was rather grouped by some Italian painter, whose fancy had grown luxuriant amid the golden summers of his clime, than one actually passing under England's colder sky, and on England's colder soil. In front there was a sloping lawn, shaded from all but the south wind, a favoured nook of verdure begirt with trees and flower-beds.

On one side, fancifully decorated with shells and spars, mosses and creeping plants, was discovered a building, between hermitage and summer pavilion; on the other waved a copse of larches, exhaling that spicy and peculiar fragrance which the autumnal wind brings from out the fir. Two little passages, cut into stairs of turf, wound uniformly to the level sward which made the foreground of the landscape. At the end of this was a sundial, whereon the moon fell with sufficient brightness to reveal the hour: beside was a fountain, whose waters trickled with a low perpetual song, from the rough lips of its carved basin, into a large reservoir, moulded from fragments of stone, sea-shells, and gnarled roots of trees bound with a growth of weeds and wild creepers. Southward, the lawn lay open to a pleasure garden, but the flowers were now but few, and those of the faintest hue and perfume. The gorgeous reds and yellows which herald decay, were beginning to touch the forest foliage; and the limes, in which autumn's first symptoms are so lovely, looked in the pale light as if covered with primrose blossoms.

Throughout the garden there was, indeed,

much arrangement, and much art; from the water-jet, trained to fling its silvery cascade, to the yew-trees shaped into peacocks: still it was arrangement prompted by taste, and art that loved the nature which it guided. And if the horticultural skill, on which Mrs. Churchill piqued herself, might have escaped the stranger's observation, the little knot now gathered before her terrace would inevitably have caught his attention.

The party was of five: Ethel and her half-companion, half-attendant, Lavinia Fenton, our countess, and two young gallants. Three of these were singing; but the attitude and bearing of the entire group, careless as it was, told of their individual peculiarities more effectively, perhaps, than would have been betrayed in more constrained hours.

Norbourne Courtenaye was a stripling of some three or four and twenty, whose fair complexion made him look even younger. He had that air which so marks our aristocracy—that air which, if not embodied in the word 'high-bred,' is beyond the reach of words. He had those fine and prominently cut features which grow handsomer

with years; but, at the present time, they conveyed only one expression. The heart was in the eyes; and these, fixed on Ethel Churchill, were blind to all but the beloved face which alone they cared to see. To Norbourne the whole world had one division, the place where she was, from that where she was not.

Ethel returned not his gaze; but she was not on that account insensible of it. Natural as it may seem to look straight forward, her eyes tried every direction save that in which they might fall on those of Courtenaye. Her part in the trio was nearly nominal, and yet no bird singing in the sunshine, seemed ever to sing more from the fulness of a joyous heart. Her voice, when you caught it, was, indeed, "the very echo of happy thoughts;" and smile after smile parted her small and childish mouth. Her beauty was of that kind which is our ideal of a cherub's—rounded, innocent, and happy. The long golden hair—for she was too young yet to have it dressed after the prevailing mode — absolutely sparkled in the light; while her skin realised the old poet's exquisite delineation :

> "Fair as the trembling snow whose fleeces clothe
> Our Alpine hills; sweet as the rose's spirit
> Or violet's cheek, on which the morning leaves
> A tear at parting."

The least cause sent the blush to the cheek, and the laughter to the lip; for Ethel was guileless as she was gay.

The darling, like Henrietta, of an aged relative, their training had been widely different. Half Ethel's life had been spent in the flower-garden; and it was as if the sweetness and joyousness of the summer's sunny children had infused themselves into the being of their youthful companion. The open air had given strength to an originally delicate frame, and cheerfulness to her mind. She had read little beyond her grandmother's cherished volumes, of which a herbal was the study, and the Cassandra of Madame Scudori the recreation. Out of these stately impossibilities, she had constructed an existence of her own, full of love, courage, and fidelity: all highly picturesque and highly false. No matter—the truth comes only too soon.

And so, when Norbourne Courtenaye, a distant connexion of the family, arrived in a course of

careless wandering at their house, it seemed the most natural and fitting thing that he should fall in love with Ethel. It seemed, too, not less natural nor less fitting, that she should fall in love with Norbourne; though not a little disheartened, at starting, by the absolute want of difficulties and adventures, with which she afterwards discovered that it was actually possible to dispense.

Mrs. Churchill saw nothing of what was going on—she had her own views for Ethel, whom she considered too much a child to have any of her own; and she was only pleased to have her house so cheerful. Family and fortune were on both sides equal; and they might enjoy, so it seemed, as long as they could contrive it, a courtship's charming uncertainty, without a solitary obstacle to render it uncertain.

Lavinia, her companion, was likewise handsome; or, perhaps, rather what is called a fine looking girl; and had in her figure and demeanour, as well as in the arrangement of her simple toilet, that which bespoke the coquette of nature's own making; and nature does as much in that way as society. Neglectful of her fine voice, she

was obviously attending more to her companions than to her own singing; and it was manifest that she was not unwilling to attract Walter Maynard's heed, for she would omit from time to time her own, and listen to his part; and, when she suffered her rich notes to swell to their extent, it was in Maynard's eyes that she sought to read approval!

But, what attention he allowed to escape from the music, was given all to Ethel Churchill. If his eye but turned towards her, the heart's utter prostration was in the gaze!

And she—the young and brilliant countess, who sat at queen-like distance from the throng—must watch those glances with a galling pang of envy; not the less bitter, too, because unacknowledged even to herself!

Walter Maynard was standing with his arms folded, and his slight figure leaning against the trunk of an old ash. He was neither so handsome, nor had so fine a figure, as Norbourne Courtenaye; and lost something of his height by a stoop, the result either of a naturally delicate chest, or of sedentary pursuits: but none, knowing how to read the human face, could have

passed by his without having their attention riveted. It had a touch of Henrietta's own rich and changeful hues, but it was more feverish. The eyes were large and black, and had the moonlight's melancholy, with that tearful lustre which is the certain sign of keen susceptibility. After-years will drive the tears, which gathered trembling on the eye-lash, back upon the heart; but the tears will be more bitter, because unshed!

The mouth was almost feminine in its sweetness, and yet the smile was sad. Tender it was, but not cheerful, and lacked the energy that sat enthroned upon the magnificent brow. Young as he was, his hair was thin upon his temples, where the large veins shone transparent and blue; and the whole countenance was one which would have won attention in a crowd—which could not be identified with a common person. He was of those whose sensitive organisation, and inborn talent, constitute that genius which holds ordinary maxims at defiance. No education can confer—no circumstances check it; and even to account for it, we need, with the ancients, to believe in inspiration.

Sir Jasper Meredith had noted the extraordi-

nary abilities shewn by Walter, even in his childhood; and, having confirmed the correctness of that first impression, had sent him to the University. There, however, he had disappointed expectation. In sooth, his genius was of too creative an order for the apprenticeship of learning; he needed life in its hopes, its fears, its endurance; all that the poet learns to reproduce. Education is for the many, and Walter Maynard was of the few. He had been much in Meredith Place, and Henrietta had been used to listen by the hour to his eloquent enthusiasm, so alive with poetry and with passion. Proud and ambitious, she yet loved him—the poor and the dependent; for there was in his highly-toned imagination that which responded to her own. She was too clever herself not to appreciate a kindred cleverness; and the seclusion of her life lent a reality to his dreams of the future—to his aspirings after that fame, which every volume in the crowded collection proclaimed to be so glorious. They read together; and she felt that his was, indeed, the master mind. Her vanity was gratified by his intellect. It was a worthy homage.

These softer feelings were awakened by that

interest which belongs to the melancholy and romance inseparable from the poetic temperament.

In the outset of their intimacy, admiration seemed a mere question of taste; and jealousy first taught her that she loved. She saw that he loved Ethel Churchill, utterly, worshippingly: that the withered flower which Ethel flung from her was to him a treasure. She then remembered that her own early bearing towards him had been haughty, and indifferent; that she had sneered at the young collegian's shyness; and now thought with "the late remorse of love," how unlike to this had been Ethel's gentle kindness. But all these things belonged to by-gone days. She wrapped herself up in a brilliant future. Still there were moments when she felt that its hopes were icicles.

CHAPTER IV.

Oh! never another dream can be
   Like that early dream of ours,
When the fairy, Hope, lay down like a child,
   And slept amid opening flowers.

Little we recked of our coming years,
   We fancied them just what we chose;
For, whatever life's after lights may be,
   It colours its first from the rose.

"So you are going to leave us?" said Ethel.

"Why, child," (they were of the same age, but Henrietta's mind had far outgone its years), "you say this in the most dolorous of tones. I really see nothing so very dreadful in going to London, where I have made up my mind to force the women to die of envy, and the men of love,—the one by my diamonds, the other by my eyes."

"None may doubt the power of the latter, at least," observed Courtenaye.

"Truce to your fine sayings," replied Henrietta; "I would not give thank-you for a compliment from a person in your position. Now,

don't blush, Ethel; I am only laying down general rules. A man in love is a nonentity for the time—he is nothing; and nature, that is, my nature, abhors a vacuum. Now, is not that a philosophical deduction, Mr. Maynard?"

Walter started from his reverie—he had not been listening.

"You never know what one is saying," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, pettishly.

"Nay," said he, in one of those deep melodious voices which almost startle with their peculiar sweetness, "I heard you speak, and, as one often does with songs, in the music I lost the words."

"How I should like," said Ethel, "to see you dressed on the day of your presentation. When I imagine things about you, I always fancy you '*reine d'amour*' at a tournament, while

> '——— your eyes
> Rain influence, and adjudge the prize.'"

"Thank Heaven," cried Henrietta, laughing, "you do not, even in fancy, turn me into a shepherdess, with sheep on one side, and a purling brook on the other."

"And yet," said Ethel, "there is something that takes my fancy mightily in these sweet and tranquil pictures. I have always felt sorrow when my shepherdess has been taken from her green meadows, even to a palace."

"Well, my vocation is not for innocent pleasures," returned Lady Marchmont: "I own I prefer my own kind to lambs and wild flowers."

"How entirely I agree with you," cried Walter Maynard: "as yet I know little of life, excepting from the written page; but existence appears to me scarcely existence, without its struggles and its success. I should like to have some great end before me; the striving to attain, amid a crowd of competitors, would make me feel all the energies of life."

"And yet," interrupted Courtenaye, "what hours of seemingly delicious reverie I have seen you pass, flung on the bank of some lonely river, where the hours were mirrored in sunshine."

"I was thinking of the future," answered Walter, "and a very pleasant thing to think about."

"If we had but one of those charming old fairies for godmothers," said Norbourne, "of

whom my nurse was so fond of telling, in the vain hope of putting me to sleep; as if I did not keep myself awake as long as I could, to hear;—if such a one were to appear, I wonder what gift we should each choose?"

"I should so like to know," replied Lady Marchmont; "now let us be honest, and frankly confess the inmost desire of our hearts. I will set the example; for, as I am going to court, I may not need to speak truth for some time, and may therefore use up what I have now. I frankly confess that my wish would be for universal admiration."

Walter Maynard paused for a moment, looking at Ethel; it was but a glance, and a deeper melancholy came over his face.

"I would wish," said he, "for fame—glorious and enduring fame."

"And I," cried Alice, eagerly, "would wish to be a lady—have an embroidered damask gown, and ride in a coach-and-six."

"I would wish," whispered Ethel, "to be loved."

"And," added Norbourne, in a whisper almost as low, "I would wish to love."

" I think," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, " that Alice's wish is the most rational of all. —Well, girl, success to your coach-and-six."

" And I wish," said a venerable old lady, who, unperceived, had joined the young circle, " that you would all come into the house—for the evening is growing damp, and supper is ready."

" My dear Mrs. Churchill, said Lady Marchmont, taking her hand, and respectfully kissing it, " you must not fancy that this is a farewell visit. I came hither to-night, for I did not know what to do with myself. The way of the world—I have had all I wanted, and must go."

" Just come in," said Mrs. Churchill, " and take one glass of my mead."

" No—not even such a golden promise tempts me. I am afraid that Lord Marchmont will be at home before me—and he is not yet accustomed to be kept waiting."

" I would not on any account detain you—but come and see us to-morrow," said the old lady, kindly.

Waving her hand, Henrietta ran rapidly down

the path by which she came, and was soon out of sight.

" She is a sweet creature, and a lovely," said Mrs. Churchill; " I wish she may bring back the same light step and heart with which she leaves us."

Mrs. Churchill was not the first person who has been deceived by appearances. The light step there assuredly was—but the light heart, Henrietta herself would have said was a heavy one. With spirits exhausted by the forced exertion of the last hour, she came back to her room even more gloomy than when she left it.

" I have seen him for the last time;"—and perhaps that moment was the only one during their whole acquaintance, that she had thought of Walter Maynard with unmixed tenderness. Pride, mortification, and disdain of his actual position, had usually mingled with all gentler thoughts. But there is something in parting that softens the heart;—it is as if we had never felt how unutterably dear a beloved object could be, till we are about to lose it for ever.

Unconsciously to herself, she had grown accustomed to see Walter Maynard, to note the

changes in his expressive face, to listen to his picturesque and impassioned discourse. It now struck her suddenly how much she should miss them. The knowledge of her own heart, and of his, had come together. Hope had never been the companion of love. Even in her most secret communings with herself, she had never admitted even the fancy of their union. But to-night she felt deeply within her secret soul the utter happiness of loving and being beloved. What were her future brilliant prospects? The truth within her whispered, that she had been happier, even in the lonely lot which she that very evening had ridiculed, with Walter Maynard, than in a palace, and not his. For the first time, she regretted her marriage. Lord Marchmont had been the cause of her drawing comparisons. Her superior mind at once detected the narrowness of his; and her warm heart shrank from his cold one. She saw that he did not love her—that he never even thought whether she loved him.

"'Tis a strange thing," she murmured,

" how love, which should be such a blessing, should yet cause so much misery and disunion. Ah! Ethel does not know her own happiness. I only wonder Mr. Courtenaye did not fall in love with me. It would have completed our game of cross-purposes,"—and she laughed aloud. The sound of her own laughter jarred upon her ear.

" What do I laugh at?" thought she; "at wasted affection—at the consciousness that, young as I am, my heart is withered—that I look to amusement as to a resource, and to vanity as the business of an existence. Ah! love is more powerful than I deemed; for at this very moment of whom am I thinking?—my kind uncle?—no; of a stranger. It is the last time I will yield to such a weakness;" and, rising from her seat, she began to pace the room. With a struggle to escape from her own thoughts, she rang for her attendants, and, complaining of fatigue, went hastily to bed. But a crowd of heavy thoughts came to her pillow; and if, when Lord Marchmont returned, he had gazed on

the beautiful face then hushed in sleep, he would have seen that the cheek was flushed, and that tears yet glistened on the long dark eyelashes.

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CHAPTER V.

A POET'S MIDNIGHT.

Is not the lark companion of the spring?
And should not Hope—that sky-lark of the heart—
Bear, with her sunny song, youth company?
Still is its sweetest music poured for love;
And that is not for me: yet will I love,
And hope, though only for her praise and tears;
And they will make the laurel's cold bright leaves
Sweet as the tender myrtle.

Henrietta's was not the only step that crossed the churchyard on that night—it was, also, Walter Maynard's nearest way home. But he paused, and stood gazing around. It was a night solemn and lovely as ever seemed fitting atmosphere for the city of the dead. There was not a cloud upon the face of the sky; the vapours and the cares of day had dispersed in the pure clear atmosphere. The dews were rising, and the long grass seemed

like a sheet of bright and waveless water in the moonlight. The panes of the Gothic window in the church glittered like a succession of small shining mirrors; and the vane on the spire was like a light placed there. The scattered tombstones lay white around; and nothing on that side the building told of the depth of shadow which was behind. The birds had long since been asleep; and not a breath of wind stirred the drooping leaves. There was an uncertain beauty in the distance, which gave an additional charm to the scene; the light, silvery and tremulous, was more indistinct than that of day. Familiar objects took new shapes, and every outline was softened down with a varying and undulating grace.

But Walter Maynard's eyes were fixed upon one spot. A light was in the window of a turret just caught among the old oaks that surrounded Mrs. Churchill's house. Once or twice a shadow flitted past, and the light was obscured. In the silence you might have heard the youthful watcher's heart beating. It was Ethel Churchill's window. At length

the light was extinguished, and Walter turned slowly away.

"It is all dark now," said he, "and the better suited to me. Why should I even wish for her love? What have I to offer? only my hopes; and what are they?" As he spake, his eyes rested on the graves below. "Yes," muttered the youth, "they are sufficient answer; they are indeed the end of all human hope."

Mechanically he turned from one to another. Some were recently banded down with osiers, and the grass was varied with primrose roots; on some the foxglove grew luxuriantly, while others had a tombstone, carved with a name and a brief epitaph.

"Ay," said Walter, "this rude verse long outlasts those for whom it is written. The writer, the reader, the sorrow which it embalmed, have long past away,—not so the verse itself. Poetry is the immortality of earth: where shall we look for our noblest thoughts, and our tenderest feelings, but in its eternal pages? The spirit within me asserts its divine

right. I know how different I am from those who surround me. Can the gifts of which I am conscious be given to me in vain? It were a mockery of the mind's supremacy, did I not believe in my own future."

He turned again in the direction of the turret-window, and the large round moon shone above the old trees. It seemed as if she looked down tenderly and lovingly on that dearest spot.

"Ah, sweetest and loveliest!" exclaimed the watcher, "would to Heaven those days were not past when the troubadour took his sword and lute, and taught far courts the light of his lady's eyes, and the music of her name! But the sympathy to which he appealed yet remains. There are still human hearts to be stirred by the haunted line, and the gifted word. My page may be read by those who will feel its deep and true meaning, because, like myself, they have loved and suffered. Farewell, sweetest Ethel! we, perhaps, shall meet no more, but you will hear of me; and the remembered beauty of that face will be

my angel of inspiration — the one sweet muse lighting up my lonely heart."

Hastily he left the churchyard, his pace rapid as his thoughts, which framed, as he went along, his future plans; and to visit London as soon as possible was his last resolve. He soon reached the dilapidated house which called him master; but the ivy, silvered by the moonlight, hid the desolation which was so apparent by day.

His family had left his father a ruined fortune, which a life of adventures did not tend to improve. Mr. Maynard returned home with an orphan boy; and a wound in his side, received while defending his superior officer, led to his premature death. With many to advise, but none to govern, the orphan boy led a desultory life, often wasting his time, but still collecting material for the future productions of a creative and poetical mind.

In one of the most original and thoughtful works of our day, it is said,—

"It is a fatal gift; for, when possessed in its highest quality and strength, what has it

ever done for its votaries? What were all those great poets of whom we talk so much? what were they in their lifetime? The most miserable of their species: depressed, doubtful, obscure; or involved in petty quarrels, and petty persecutions; often unappreciated, utterly uninfluential, beggars, flatterers of men, unworthy of their recognition. What a train of disgustful incidents, what a record of degrading circumstances, is the life of a great poet!"*

This is too true a picture; still, what does it prove, but that this earth is no home for the more spiritual part of our nature—that those destined to awaken our highest aspirations, and our tenderest sympathies, are victims rather than votaries of the divine light within them? They gather from sorrow its sweetest emotions; they repeat of hope but its noblest visions; they look on nature with an earnest love, which wins the power of making her hidden beauty visible; and they reproduce the

* Contarini Fleming.

passionate, the true, and the beautiful. Alas! they themselves are not what they paint; the low want subdues the lofty will; the small and present vanity interferes with the far and glorious aim: but still it is something to have looked beyond the common sphere where they were fated to struggle. They paid in themselves the bitter penalty of not realising their own ideal; but mankind have to be thankful for the generous legacy of thought and harmony bequeathed by those who were among earth's proscribed and miserable. Fame is bought by happiness.

CHAPTER VI.

MUCH CHANGE IN A LITTLE TIME.

And she too—that beloved child, was gone—
Life's last and loveliest link. There was her place
Vacant beside the hearth—he almost dreamed
He saw her still; so present was her thought.
Then some slight thing reminded him how far
The distance was that parted her and him.
Fear dwells around the absent—and our love
For such grows all too anxious, too much filled
With vain regrets, and fond inquietudes:
We know not Love till those we love depart.

NOT above a month had elapsed since the little party were seated on the sloping lawn; and yet that short space had sufficed to change the position of all assembled in the pleasant quiet of that evening.

In the gloomy library of Meredith Place is seated an old man, surrounded by books which he is too weary to read, and by chemical apparatus which he has not spirits to use. Till she went, Sir Jasper knew not how

dearly the child of his old age had clung to his very existence. He fancied that he had resources in his own mind: alas! the mind ill supplies the wants of the heart. There is to age something so enlivening in the company of youth, unconsciously it shares the cheerfulness it witnesses, and hopes with the hopes around, in that sympathy which is the kindliest part of our nature. Even his young neighbour, who so often shared his studies, had departed — Walter Maynard had gone to London. Nor was the house of the Churchills less altered. Their young kinsman had received a sudden summons from his mother, on the occasion of his uncle, Lord Norborne's visit. Ethel sat lonely on the little lawn, where every thing had altered almost as much as her own feelings. The approach of autumn's bleaker hour had stripped many of the trees of their foliage, and the bare boughs waved disconsolate to a low and moaning wind. The last of the flowers had fallen from the stem; and there was not even moonlight to soften the dreariness of the scene. The dark evenings

closed in rapidly, and even the cheerful fireside failed to bring back the smile to Ethel's lip, or the gladness to her eye. There was, however, one time to which she and Sir Jasper alike looked forward. The post came in twice a-week; and the sound of the horn, though its arrival was always expected, and every minute of the hour before it came counted, while the breath was held for fear of losing a sound, yet not the less did Ethel's colour deepen to crimson, and her heart beat even to pain. Night after night, too, did she sink back with the sickness of disappointed hope. No letter came from Norborne Courtenaye.

Sir Jasper was more fortunate: he also set two days apart in the week, he also counted minutes of the evenings when the post came in; but he was never disappointed—it always brought him a letter. Whatever might be the young countess's engagements, none prevented her from writing to her uncle; and for the sake of the beloved writer the aged recluse took an interest in all the news of the day—in such light chronicles as the following epistle.

FIRST LETTER OF LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

Vanity! guiding power, 'tis thine to rule
Statesman and vestryman—the knave or fool.
The Macedonian crossed Hydaspes' wave,
Fierce as the storm, and gloomy as the grave.
Urged by the thought, what would Athenians say,
When next they gathered on a market-day?
And the same spirit that induced his toil,
Leads on the cook, to stew, and roast, and boil:
Whether the spice be mixed—the flag unfurled—
Each deems their task the glory of the world.

After all, my dearest uncle, nothing has impressed me more strongly than our first approach to London. It was getting dusk, and I had for some time been leaning back fatigued in the carriage, when, raising my head, I saw afar off a line of tremulous light on the horizon: it was the reflection of the myriad lamps and fires of the vast city we were about to enter. Next came a hollow murmur, something like the sound of the sea on our coast; but it soon

grew less instinct with the mysterious harmony of the mighty, but most musical, world of waters—it was broken and harsh, and the noise of wheels was easily distinguished. Then we became involved, as it were, in a wilderness of houses; and there was something singularly oppressive in the feeling of immensity and of loneliness that came over me. The heavy vapours which hung dark and dense upon the air, were as if they rose charged with the crime and suffering of the multitudes below; and the faint light was like their feeble endeavours to struggle through the weary weight flung upon existence. How little and how worthless appeared all my own gay schemes and glad anticipations! I shrank from them as if they were a criminal selfishness. But, as you have sometimes said, I have not suffered enough for my fits of despondency to last very long: mine passed away on arriving at my new house—I cannot say home; that word is reserved for my childhood and you—dear old Meredith Place is still home to me. I was full of eagerness and curiosity, and would fain have snatched

a candle from one of the servants, and ran over every room at once. But this was quite contrary to Lord Marchmont's ideas of the fitness of things; and he is, as you know, a disciplinarian in small matters. He has a genius for furniture, and piques himself on screens and arm-chairs.

We arrived three hours later than he intended, and, as the house could not be seen in the precise manner that he wished, he decided that it should not be seen at all till the next day. My own apartment, however, I was allowed to enter; and very pretty, I must say, it is. It is hung with Indian-silk, where the brightest of birds, and the gayest of flowers, disport themselves on a white ground. The screens and dressing-table are of black japan, while the mirror is set in exquisite silver filigree work, of which material are also the boxes of my toilette. There are also two large Venetian glasses. Lord Marchmont's picture used to hang in the place of one: he has it removed to the library,—"Taking for granted," said he, "that you would prefer

your own face to mine. Besides, it is too much of a good thing to have both substance and shadow." The conjugal gallantry was delicate—and true.

I was delighted the next morning when I approached the window: it looks on a small but pleasant garden, opening into the Green Park. The fine old trees looked like familiar friends. In the distance were the towers of the Abbey, bathed with the golden tinge of early morning. I looked towards it, and thought of the happy evenings passed over the clasped volumes in which its annals are recorded. How glad I now am of all that we used to read together! I have now a thousand associations with you and the past, where otherwise there would be none.

My time is divided between visitors and dressmakers. Madame Legarde, the "glass of fashion and the nurse of form," (*alias*, the most fashionable of milliners), has comfortably assured me, "that my figure has great merit, and only requires cultivation:" this is to be done by tissues, brocades, and laces, which

are now scattered round me in charming confusion.

What a duty to oneself it is to be young, vain, and pretty! but the middle quality is the most important. Vanity is a cloak that wraps us up comfortably, and a drapery which sets us off to the best advantage; and its great merit is, that it suits itself to every sort of circumstance.

I have just had an amusing incident happen, very illustrative of my theory. Lord Marchmont gives dinners with a due sense of their importance, and our *chef de cuisine* is a master of the divine art. His late master fought a duel with his most intimate friend, because he found that he had been holding forth strong inducements for Chloe to become his. "My mistress," said the indignant Amphitryon, "was at his service; but to think of his endeavouring to seduce my cook!" Chloe had, however, a high sense of honour: "A false friend does not deserve me," was his only reply. The death, however, of Lord C —— set him free to an admiring world, and March-

mont was the successful candidate for his favours. Hitherto their harmony has been perfect—each appreciated the other; and it had been settled between them, that the first dinner after our marriage was to be a triumph.

This morning Chloe sent to ask an audience; it was granted, and he entered my dressing-room.

> "Just such a man, so wan, so spiritless,
> Drew Priam's curtains in the dead of night,
> And came to tell him that his Troy was burned."

Chloe is a tall meagre-looking individual, just embodying the popular idea of a Frenchman. "*Mon Dieu!* madame!" exclaimed he, all but throwing himself at my feet in the most theatrical of attitudes (Titus, for example, in a scene of despair with Berenice), "mine honour is in your hands—I appeal to your feelings—you see before you de most miserable of humanity—*ma gloire* is the sacrifice of his lordship's prejudice! He will not hear reason, but he will hear you."

"Thank you," said I, laughing.

"Ah, madame!" he exclaimed, "I do only

mean, that you leave no reason for people to judge with; therefore they must let you judge for them—will you pity me?"

Well, to make short of a long story, told with a broken accent that made it doubly *piquant*, and embellished with gestures equally earnest and grotesque,—I found that the ornaments now used at desserts are on a gigantic scale; and Chloe believed that he had immortalised himself by a representation of the war of the Titans against the gods. Unfortunately, they were higher than even the room; and Lord Marchmont refused to comply with the wishes of the *artiste*, and to take down his splendidly painted ceiling to admit of the dessert. This threw Chloe into an agony: with tears in his eyes, he implored my intercession. "*C'est mon avenir* dat I ask of you. I have not slept for nights, filled with my grand project—*mais c'est magnifique!* Will madame fancy the entrance of de giants—taller than de tallest figures at de duke of—vat is dat berry?—ah! de queen's, Queensberry, or gooseberry."

My dear uncle, I behaved like an angel:

I did not laugh—I admired the design—I sympathised with the professor's honourable ambition, but suggested a remedy. "A man of your genius," I said, "should despise the beaten track: all you can do with your giants is to have them a little larger than others have had. Invent something fresh—a hint is all that is needed by a man like yourself. Why not introduce pigmies? let us have some mythological device, executed in an exquisite style."

"*Madame est un ange de bonté! je comprends—mais c'est ravissant!* My rivals shall die! Yes, we will have the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in the temple of Solomon. *Je vois tout ce qu'il y a de grand dans votre idée.* De temple shall be of fine spun sugar, and Hymen shall hold a littel torch of scented flame: then de apple flung by de goddess Discord shall be gold."

"Rather ominous," I exclaimed, "for a bridal feast."

"Ah, no! von fine moral lesson; and it shall be gilded. *Quel plaisir de faire une chose*

si nouvelle et si sublime! Madame need not fear that she has intrusted her scheme to an unworthy hand—*je me dévoue à l'exécution. Mille graces*—madame has saved my life *et ma gloire.* If she wants the least small *bouillon,* I will always see to it myself."

So saying, he bowed out of the room with an air divided between conscious merit and tender gratitude.

Any subject after this important one must be insipid; I, therefore, bid you good-night. God bless you, my dearest uncle!

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

Which was the true philosopher ? — the sage
Who to the sorrows and the crimes of life
Gave tears — or he who laughed at all he saw ?
Such mockery is bitter, and yet just :
And Heaven well knows the cause there is to weep.
Methinks that life is what the actor is —
Outside there is the quaint and gibing mask ;
Beneath, the pale and careworn countenance.

My dear, kind Uncle,—I cannot tell you the effect which the sight of your handwriting had upon me. It was the first letter that I ever had from you in my life. How bitterly it reminded me that we were separated! and yet I was very glad to hear from you. I am ashamed to tell you that I cried like a child before I opened it, or rather before I read it: still, it has made me much happier. It reminded me, that there was one person to whom every thing that concerned me was an object

of interest ; it broke the sense of loneliness that has pressed upon me ever since my arrival.

I do not agree with Mrs. Churchill's sweeping condemnation, " that London is only a great, wicked, expensive place ;" but you leave the fairy-land of fancy behind you for ever, on entering it. It is the most real place in the world; you will inevitably be brought to your level. If I were to quit it now, I should quit it not liking it at all; no one does who, having country habits, comes up for only a short time. The sense of your own insignificance is anything but pleasant ; then you are hurried through a round of amusements for which you have not acquired a relish, they being, as yet, unconnected with any little personal vanities. You suffer from bodily fatigue, because the exertion is of a kind to which you are unaccustomed; moreover, you feel your own deficiencies, and exaggerate both their importance and the difficulty of overcoming them. But this is only " beginning at the very beginning ;" and I have a very brilliant perspective — I intend to be so courted,

so flattered, and so "beautiful." You will laugh at my making up my mind to the last; but I do assure you that a great deal depends on yourself.

The first step towards establishing pretensions of any kind, is to believe firmly in them yourself: faith is very catching, and half the beauty-reputations of which I hear have originated with the possessors. Having determined upon being a beauty, it is absolutely necessary that I should have my portrait taken by Sir Godfrey Kneller: a portrait of his is a positive diploma of loveliness.

Among my new acquaintance is Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who is just returned from Constantinople, where her husband was ambassador. She is very handsome, very amusing, and a little alarming. She tells me, very frankly, that she has taken a great liking to me.

"Not, my dear," said she, "that I profess the least friendship for you—friendship is just an innocent delusion, to round a period in a moral essay. I lay it down as a rule, that all men are rascals to women, and all women

rascals to each other. Perhaps, very young girls, who do not know what to do with a superabundance of affection, run up a kind of romantic liking for each other; but it never lasts — one good-looking young man would break up all the female friendships that ever were formed. In our secret heart we all hate each other. What I shall expect from you is a little pleasant companionship; and I offer you the same in return."

My protestations of "so flattered," and "too happy," were interrupted by her continuing: —

"The fact is, we have each the charm of novelty. I know every body, and shall put them in the worst possible point of view. I shall, therefore, be both useful and agreeable. You at present know nobody, and will like to hear all about them — especially to know the worst: of course, therefore, you will be a good listener. Now, a good listener is the most fascinating of companions. In time I shall have told all I have to tell, and you will have heard all that you care to hear: then our bond

of union ceases; and so will our friendship, unless we can in any way make a convenience of each other."

Well, I have made a plunge into the cold bath of her ladyship's acquaintance, and she accompanied me to Sir Godfrey's. It was quite a visit of canvassing, for he has almost given up his profession; it is a favour if he paints you. Lady Mary told me some amusing anecdotes. Among others, she repeated to me a conversation between him and Pope, who called on a visit of condolence during a severe fit of illness. The poet, by way of comfort, gave him every prospect of going to heaven. "Ver good place," replied the invalid, "but I wish *le bon Dieu* would let me stay in my new house—it is good enough for me."

One day, Gay was reading to him a most outrageous panegyric, in which he ascribed to Kneller every virtue under the sun—perhaps a few more. Sir Godfrey heard him with great complacency, only interrupting him by a few approving nods, or a "by Gott, sare, you say de truth." At the close, he highly

applauded the performance, but said, "You have done well, Mistere Gay—ver well, as far as you have gone; but you have left me out one great quality. It is good for de Duke of Marlborough that I was not a soldier, and his enemy. Once, when I was such a littel boy, I was on St. Mark's Place in Venice, and dey let off some fireworks. By Gott, I liked de smell of de gunpowder! Ah! sare, I should have made von great general—I should have killed men instead of making dem discontent vith demselves, as my pictures do."

Sir Godfrey is a little, shrewd-looking old man, with manners courteous even to kindness. He received us with the greatest *empressement*, and was in excellent humour, having just received a haunch of venison from one of the principal auctioneers. "There," he exclaimed, in a tumult of soft emotion, "is a goot man! He loves me—see what beautiful fat is on his venison!"

A few judicious remarks, while he was shewing us his pictures, placed me high in his favour; but my last compliment was the climax.

"I am," said I, in a tone of the most modest hesitation, "afraid, Sir Godfrey, to sit to you. I shall be discontented with my looking-glass for the rest of my life."

"Mine Gott!" exclaimed he, "your ladyship has a genius for de fine arts—you taste, you feel dem. But do not be afraid—you shall only look your best; your picture vill teach you de duty you owe to yourself—you must try to look like it."

I thanked him for the glorious ambition which he thus set before me; and we took our leave, saying a profusion of fine things to each other.

You see, my dear uncle, I write to you in the most merciless manner: I spare you nothing that happens to me. At least, details only kept in mind for your sake will shew my dearest, kindest uncle, how affectionately he is remembered by his

Grateful and devoted

HENRIETTA.

P.S. Lord Marchmont, whenever he sees

me writing, sends you a message of equal length and civility. Once named, it will do for always. You can keep it by you like a stock of frozen provision.

CHAPTER VII.

Few know of life's beginnings—men behold
The goal achieved. The warrior, when his sword
Flashes red triumph in the noonday sun;
The poet, when his lyre hangs on the palm;
The statesman, when the crowd proclaim his voice,
And mould opinion on his gifted tongue:
They count not life's first steps, and never think
Upon the many miserable hours
When hope deferred was sickness to the heart.
They reckon not the battle and the march,
The long privations of a wasted youth;
They never see the banner till unfurled.
What are to them the solitary nights,
Past pale and anxious by the sickly lamp,
Till the young poet wins the world at last,
To listen to the music long his own?
The crowd attend the statesman's fiery mind
That makes their destiny; but they do not trace
Its struggle, or its long expectancy.
Hard are life's early steps; and, but that youth
Is buoyant, confident, and strong in hope,
Men would behold its threshold, and despair.

UNDER what different aspects may the same place appear! Walter Maynard arrived in

London on the same night with Lady Marchmont. He stopped at an inn suiting his finances. It was in a dark narrow lane in the city; and the young traveller sat down in the public room, where he was half stifled by the smoke, and half deafened by the noise. What a feeling of desolation, and of vastness, had struck upon his heart as he passed through a few of those crowded streets of which there seemed no ending! It seemed impossible but that, amid so many faces, there must be one that he knew: but, no; all alike were strangers. He felt himself utterly alone; and, for the first time, shrank when he considered how slender were his resources. A small sum of money, a letter of introduction to Sir Jasper Meredith's bookseller, and a card of address where to find Norbourne Courtenaye when he happened to be in London,—these were his all. He pushed aside his frugal meal with utter distaste, and looked round on his companions: at once he felt all conversation with them to be hopeless. He listened to the conversation of the two men next him, who were quarrelling over, rather

than discussing, the "Craftsman," which they had just been reading. Both were so decidedly wrong, that it was hardly possible for human nature at twenty-two to avoid setting them right. The consequence was, that the one called him a fool, and the other offered to fight him. A mild, respectable-looking man interfered, and, pacifying the combatants, drew Walter into a corner, and began conversing with him pleasantly enough. The conversation was only a little interrupted by glances from the pretty hostess, who seemed anxious to attract the attention of the handsome young stranger.

"Why, it is later than I thought," exclaimed the stranger, as the clock struck. "Good night, my young friend—I dare say we shall meet again; and let me give you a word of parting advice—never interfere with what does not concern you."

A few minutes after his departure, Walter found that his purse was gone.

"I thought how it would be," cried the landlady; "but I could not catch your eye.

Why, the man you were talking to is a first-rate pickpocket — a very clever man. Let me give you a piece of good advice: always be on your guard against strangers; you may be sure that every body wants to take you in."

It is amazing how well the hostess contrived, during the two or three days that Walter remained in the house, to illustrate her theory by practice. Weary and dispirited, Walter retired to the little, close chamber which was his bed-room. One must be uncomfortable to be thoroughly out of sorts. A great sorrow forgets every thing but itself; but little sorrows exaggerate themselves and each other.

As yet our traveller had to contend with only the smaller order. He sat down in the window-seat, in a most profitless mood of dejection. More than once the sweet face of Ethel rose to his mind's eye; but he glanced round his chamber, and hastily dismissed it. He was ashamed of thinking of her in such a position; he felt, with morbid sensitiveness, the social distinction between them. The wings of his

fancy seemed to melt, like those of Icarus, now that he approached the sun of his hopes, London. The air of the narrow chamber grew more and more oppressive, and he flung open the window, which looked into a churchyard. The moonlight fell over the white stones which press so heavily on the dust beneath.

"The last churchyard I looked upon," exclaimed Walter, "how different was it from this! There the sweet influences of nature shed their own beauty over the presence of death. The wild-flowers sprung up amid the grass; the dew shone on the leaves; and the murmurs of a nameless music stirred the sweeping branches of the oak. Here, all is harsh and artificial: the palpable weight of human care seems upon the thick atmosphere. The very dead are crowded together, and crushed beneath the weight of those dreary-looking stones. "Ah!" exclaimed he, as he turned, with a cold shudder, from the window, "I hope I shall never be buried in a city."

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRIVED AT HOME.

A pale and stately lady, with a brow
That might have well beseemed a Roman dame,
Cornelia, ere her glorious children died;
Or that imperial mother, who beheld
Her son forgive his country at her word.
Yet there was trouble written on her face;
The past had left its darkness.

It was a wretched evening on which Norbourne Courtenaye reached his home. A cold wind, a piercing rain, and a bad road, with a worse hack (for his own horses had been knocked up), rendered more acute the misery which he, as a parted lover, was bound to feel. He felt himself more unhappy at every succeeding mile; and when he arrived—wet through, cold, tired, and hungry—he conceived, very justly, that he was the most unhappy of created beings. Still,

it was almost worth while to endure all these sufferings for the sake of such a welcome as awaited him at home. A good fire, and a good dinner, are wonderful restoratives; and Mrs. Courtenaye was so happy at seeing her son again, that he could not but feel happy too. She hung round him, watching his every look as if she grudged the veriest menial offices from the servants; and she almost scolded him for not eating, when he had done justice enough to the good things set before him to have satisfied even the cook herself. Some old writer says, "we like to see those we love eating and sleeping;" and there is much truth in the homely remark. We like them to be the objects of our active care, or of our patient watchfulness.

Mrs. Courtenaye idolised her son, with that intense love which a reserved and proud temper feels for the one and only object on which it lavishes all its hoarded affection. His father had died when his only child was but two years old; and to that child his young, rich, and beautiful widow, had been wholly devoted.

Many suitors she certainly had; but even the wildest jest had never given one of them a hope of success. It was said that she spoiled her son—it was not so. Her strong sense and excellent judgment preserved her authority; which was strengthened, not weakened, by the tenderest care that ever mother bestowed on orphan. From her lips, a reproof was sufficient punishment; for the boy well knew that he was the least sufferer.

Mrs. Courtenaye was rather respected than popular in the neighbourhood; her habits were secluded, though no one dispensed more liberally that hospitality which suited their position in the country. She was of an old Catholic Scotch family, and had been educated in a Spanish convent, which she never left till her marriage with Mr. Courtenaye. Some said that her union with a heretic weighed upon her mind, and that her penances were of an unusually strict order. There was that in her still fine, but careworn features, which seemed to bear out the assertion. She was subject to fits of deep melancholy; and, even in her most

social hours, there was a sort of subdued sadness in her eyes; and she never had the glad, frank manner of one whose heart is at ease. Her very fondness for her son had something mournful in it; she seemed to fear the indulgence of all earthly affections. Still, nothing could be more perfect than the union of herself and her child. It was touching to see them together; for, if this cold world has one tie more holy, and more redeemed from all selfish feeling than another, it is that which binds the widow and the orphan together.

His dress changed, and his dinner over, Norbourne followed Mrs. Courtenaye to the drawing-room, where she had left his uncle and cousin. Their way lay through the hall, where hung the helm of many a bold forefather, and arms that had seen service even in the crusades.

"I cannot help, dearest mother," said he, half seriously, half smiling, "having a little respect for myself when I return home. My noble ancestors have bequeathed to me an honourable name:—well, I will at least strive

not to disgrace it." Mrs. Courtenaye fondly pressed his hand, and he could see that the tears stood in her eyes. "I should rather have said," exclaimed he, "I will at least try to be worthy of my mother."

They found Lord Norbourne so engaged with a heap of political pamphlets, that he did not at first perceive their entrance. When he did, he welcomed his nephew with great cordiality,—we should rather say courtesy, for Lord Norbourne had never been cordial in his life. He hurried together questions and compliments.

"On my honour, Mrs. Courtenaye, you will make me an advocate for petticoat government, after such a specimen of its excellent influence. Still, my young friend, I am like the rest of the world—cannot leave well alone—must have you up to town. Sir Robert was inquiring about the representative of our house, only the other day. I, you know, am but a younger brother. But I forget that you have not seen your cousin for an age. You young people must have an immense deal to talk

over. There, Norbourne, I consign you to younger and fairer hands."

So saying, he resumed his seat and his pamphlets, in which he appeared completely absorbed. Mrs. Courtenaye took up a religious work, and she, too, turned her face away. Her eyes were resolútely fixed on the page, but she saw it not. Her cheek was pale and cold as marble, and there was that convulsive quiver about the mouth which is the most certain sign of mental agitation.

Norbourne drew kindly towards his cousin Constance. He had for her the affection of early habit, and the tenderness of pity. Delicate and slightly deformed, with only one surviving parent, whose affection chiefly shewed itself in ambitious projects for her aggrandisement, there was much in Constance's position that awakened the softest compassion. When Norbourne entered the room, a deep flush of crimson betrayed how instantly she recognised him. The colour had faded, but enough remained to make her look almost pretty; and, if any thing can make a woman

look so, it is the presence of him she loves. Poor Constance loved her cousin timidly; for, painfully conscious of her personal defects, she was shy and retiring. During the lives of her sisters, she had been thrown quite in the background; and her cousin had been the only one from whom she had always received support and consideration. How gratefully does a woman repay such a debt!

Norbourne Courtenaye was the only person with whom Constance was at her ease. During the lifetime of her beautiful sisters she had met with so many mortifications that she shrank from all general society; and she had been too secluded, during the last twelvemonth, to know the merits and charms which would inevitably be found in Lord Norbourne's heiress. Of her father she stood in great awe, and of her aunt scarcely less; to which was also added a sense of strangeness. But Norbourne she had known from a child: he had taken her part as a boy, and as a young man had never neglected her; her memory was stored with a thousand slight attentions which he had himself forgotten.

After the first flutter of conscious delight which his entrance had caused, she was able to talk to him cheerfully, and her spirits rose with the unwonted enjoyment.

It may be doubted whether Lord Norbourne was quite as much engrossed by his pamphlets as he appeared; for once or twice, as his daughter's laugh reached his ear, his stern features relaxed into a smile, which changed the whole expression of his face. More than once, too, he tried to catch Mrs. Courtenaye's eye; but she was too much absorbed in her book. Norbourne, it must be confessed, was impatient for the close of the evening: he had so much that he wished to tell his mother, and it struck him that she looked unusually pale and harassed. Still his cousin's claims, as a woman and his guest, were imperative; and, moreover, he felt for a young creature, shut out from so many ordinary sources of enjoyment, and whose life was so solitary. But never had she appeared so utterly uninteresting as now; for Ethel's sweet face shone before him, a sad contrast to the sickly and languid countenance

of Constance. Neither had Constance the natural talents of Ethel; she was deficient in all powers of conversation. Accustomed to be repressed and neglected, she lacked courage to say what she thought. What a change from the sweet, uncurbed vivacity of Ethel, whose thoughts sprang directly from the heart into utterance! At length, however, the evening wore away; and, after kindly assisting his cousin across the gallery, Norbourne hurried to his mother's dressing-room: she was just going in, as he asked admission to tell all his adventures.

"Not to-night, my beloved child; you must be tired: not to-night."

She leant forward to kiss his forehead: he started at the touch, for her lips were cold as ice.

CHAPTER IX.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF YOUTH AND AGE.

There was a shadow on his face, that spake
Of passion long since hardened into thought.
He had a smile, a cold and scornful smile ;
Not gaiety, not sweetness, but the sign
Of feelings moulded at their master's will.
A weary world was hidden at that heart;
Sorrow and strife were there, and it had learnt
The weary lessons time and sorrow teach;
And deeply felt itself the vanity
Of love and hope, and now could only feel
Distrust in them, and mockery for those
Who could believe in what he knew was vain.

It was with a natural touch of pride that Norbourne Courtenaye paced his paternal hall, while waiting for his uncle, with whom he was going to ride. It was one of those fine specimens of Norman architecture which yet attest the taste of that stately race. It was lined with oak, long since black with age, richly

carved in all the quaint devices of art, then in its childhood; but the arms of the family, the crest, and the motto, were conspicuous every where. Around were those memorials to which time gives such value — several complete suits of armour, each belonging to some honourable name, whose deeds were the theme of legendary story. The dark plumes yet waved over each helmet, the slight feather outlasting the stalwart warrior on whose head it had once danced: a fragile thing, yet more enduring than its master. There were stands, too, of curious arms — some strange and foreign-looking eastern cimiters, whose crooked steel had been brought from Palestine: others, of a more recent date, had equally their history. There were the short heavy carbines, and the richly mounted pistols, which had done their duty in the parliamentary wars, when the Courtenayes followed the fortunes of the ill-fated Charles. The gallant history came down to the present time; for there were the colours which his father had taken from a French

battery with his own hands, at the battle of Blenheim, and for which he received the thanks of Marlborough.

The Gothic windows of painted glass

> "Taught light to counterfeit a gloom;"

and the rich purple and yellow dyes fell, in gorgeous confusion, on the relics around. A magnificent prospect lay beyond. On one side, you could see only the vast extent of park, whose oaks might have served as temples to the Druids: deer were feeding on the sunny slopes; and on a noble lake you saw the glittering of the morning light on the white wings of the swans. On the south side, the view was more varied: fields and orchards were obviously in a state of high cultivation; and a church, built by his grandfather, crowned the hill. Below, cottages peeped from among the trees, realising all the painter could have wished of quiet and cheerfulness. The view stretched away like a panorama, lost in the gray and misty tints which mingle with the sunshine of an October morning. Far as the

eye could reach all was his own: his forefathers had built those cottages, had planted those trees. He could not look around without the consciousness of power.

I frankly confess that I have a respect for family pride. If it be a prejudice, it is prejudice in its most picturesque shape; but I hold that it is connected with some of the noblest feelings in our nature. Is it nothing to be connected with the history of one's country, and to feel

> The name of every noble ancestor
> A bond upon your soul against disgrace?

No one, who admits the rule, can deny its exceptions; but I believe the pride of blood to have a beneficial influence. It is much to feel, that the high and the honourable belong to a name that is pledged to the present by recollections of the past.

It would have been difficult to find a finer specimen of the English aristocracy than the handsome and intelligent young man on whom his uncle's eye had fixed on entering. There

was something peculiar in that gaze. It was obviously one of pride in its object; but there was also sadness, which gradually changed into an expression of harsh determination. There was something, however, contagious in the glad, frank greeting of his nephew; something, too, in the soft clear morning air, that Lord Norbourne could not quite resist. He sprang on horseback with a feeling of vague enjoyment, which he was as little as any man in the habit of experiencing.

"Whither shall we ride?" said he, after they had cantered a little distance over the soft grass of the park. The influence of custom, that second nature, stronger even than the first, was upon him; he had enjoyed himself quite enough — he now wanted an object.

"There is a splendid view from those hills, or ——"

Here Norbourne was interrupted by his uncle laughing much louder than he often permitted himself to do.

"Why, my dear boy," exclaimed he, "what have you ever seen in me to imagine I cared

for any prospect that did not terminate in Whitehall? Green trees and blue skies are very well in their way; I believe indispensable to painters, and useful to poets: I was not aware that I figured in either department."

"No one ever suspected, or even accused you of such proceedings," replied Norbourne, smiling at the idea of his lordship in either capacity; "but can you not understand enjoying the country for its own sake?"

"No, I cannot," replied his companion, drily.

"Is it possible?" cried his nephew, eagerly. "I cannot ride along, this lovely morning, without a thrill of delight. My whole frame seems lighter; a thousand subtle influences excite my spirits; I catch beauties I never saw before, and long for some one to admire with me."

"All this," replied the other, "only proves what a good constitution you have, and that you are very young. I dare say you will grow more rational in time."

"More rational!" cried Norbourne; "nay, now, I have all the high authorities. Is not

this delicious quiet, this serenity of rural enjoyment, the one admitted happiness of human existence; that which the statesman craves, and the philosopher holds forth, as the golden secret of life?"

"Statesmen and philosophers too," replied Lord Norbourne, "often talk a great deal of nonsense. Half of what are called our finest sentiments originate in the necessity of rounding a sentence. Lord Bolingbroke writes, with an eloquence which would make an enthusiast rave, about the dignity and the delight of retirement: I do not find that he intrigues with one atom less of activity to obtain a place in the ministry."

"Do you know him?" asked Norbourne, eagerly.

"Ah! he is one of your idols, I suppose," said Lord Norbourne, with a slight approach to a sneer. "Youth is prone to admire; but it is odd how, in a few years, we discover the defects of our demigods. At first we look only to the head of the image, which is of gold: we soon find the necessity of looking down to

earth, were it but to find out our path; and then we discover that our idol has feet of clay!"

"Is there no such thing as excellence?" exclaimed his listener.

"Very far from it. I admit that there are a great many excellent things in this world; Sir Robert's last measures, for example," returned his uncle, half smiling. "I would only warn you against youth's usual error of believing and expecting too much—not that I expect you to take my warning. I do not often give advice: first, because it is a bad habit that of giving any thing; and, secondly, because I always think of the ambassador's answer to Oliver's declaration, 'that if the court of Spain cut off his head, he would send them the heads of every Spaniard in his dominions.' 'Yes, please your highness,' returned the diplomatist, 'but among them all there may not be one to fit my shoulders.' In like manner, with all our choice of other people's experience, there is never any that suits us but our own."

" In the meantime," said Norbourne, " we have arrived at the park-gate, and have not determined whither we shall ride."

> ' Crowded cities please me then,
> And the busy scenes of men.'

" For ' then,' substitute ' always,' and Milton has just expressed my sentiments," replied his uncle. The ' crowded cities' are unattainable, but there are still ' the busy haunts of men.' Let us go and call on some of our neighbours. After all, the country may be interesting when there is a rumour of a general election."

CHAPTER X.

Ah ! waking dreams, that mock the day,
Have other ends than those
That come beneath the moonlight ray,
And charm the eyes they close.

The vision, colouring the night,
'Mid bloom and brightness wakes,
Banished by morning's cheerful light,
Which brightens what it breaks.

But dreams, which fill the waking eye
With deeper spells than sleep,
When hours unnumbered pass us by ;
From such we wake and weep.

We wake, but not to sleep again,
The heart has lost its youth ;
The morning light that wakes us then,
Cold, calm, and stern, is truth.

Norbourne was amply repaid for giving up his gallop over the hills, by the curious study which his uncle presented. He was astonished at the facility with which Lord

Norbourne seemed to divine the character of each individual, and how he contrived to adapt himself to it. He avoided politics, and yet often managed to make Sir Robert Walpole the subject of discourse; but it was only to tell some favourable personal anecdote. Once or twice he was fairly entangled in an argument; and each time he allowed himself to be convinced on some minor point, which left, however, the original subject quite untouched.

An allusion to some pamphlet, which had just made a noise, induced Norbourne to mention Walter Maynard to his uncle in terms of warm praise.

"He realises," exclaimed he, warmly, "all one ever imagines of genius. He has the keenest sensibility, and this gives him the key to the sensibility of others. He is eloquent, for his heart is in his words; and he has that passionate melancholy which is the true element of poetry."

"Say no more," interrupted Lord Norbourne; "you have described the man of all others the most unfitted to struggle with the

actual world. His sensibility will make him alive to a thousand annoyances, which would be scarcely perceptible to one of colder mould; his eloquence will obtain just admiration enough to deceive him; and his melancholy only asks a few years' experience to deepen into utter despondency. Still, give me his town address; I will, if I can, serve any friend of yours."

"He has wonderful talents," continued his friend.

"Talents," resumed Lord Norbourne, "of this high and imaginative order, seem to me rather given to benefit others than their possessor. Their harvest is in the future, not the present. Their brains produce the golden ore, which commoner hands mould to the daily purposes of life."

"I think," replied the young advocate, unwilling to give up a point in which his feelings were interested, "that even you would believe in Walter Maynard's success in life, if you knew him. What has brought the world to its present state, but individual talent?"

"I do not deny your assertion," said his

uncle; "but minds of the higher order are not the best suited to ordinary use. I cannot express my meaning better than by using a simile of our opponent, the Irish dean. Swift says, — 'take a finely-polished razor, and you will waste your labour in getting through a ream of paper, which you need to cut: a coarse bone knife will answer your purpose much better.' Now, your fine-minded man is the razor, and I leave you to make the application."

"Well," replied Courtenaye, "I commend him to your kindness, and beg you to put your judgment out of the question."

"A very common method of acting in this life. But," continued Lord Norbourne, "you can form wishes for a friend—have you none for yourself? I am amazed to see a young man of your appearance and talents—though, after I have been thus depreciating the latter, it is almost an affront to say any thing about those you possess — I am amazed to see you vegetating among your own oaks, as if, like them, growth were your only value."

"I often visit London," replied Norbourne.

"Yes," interrupted his uncle, with something between a smile and a sneer, "to decide on the merits of rival actresses; to bear away a few *bon-mots* from the coffee-houses; to see that the fashion of your hair is not too much behind hand; and to choose the newest embroidery for your waistcoat."

Norbourne coloured; for there was, at least, truth enough in the description to make it come home.

"As little do I think that your country pursuits deserve to engross your time. Life was given for something better than sitting after fish, walking after birds, and riding after hares."

"As well, my dear uncle," said Courtenaye, laughing, "as tying up your whole life with red tape."

Lord Norbourne smiled.

"We will not try any more attempts at wit. Wit only gains you the reputation of being hard-hearted, which it is very well to be in reality, but not to have the reputation of being. It shocks people's little innocent pre-

judices, and these I always respect when I can. Indeed, the only character I ever found of any use to a man, was that of having no character at all."

"That is the very fault I find with your faction," exclaimed his hearer, eagerly. "It is too much the fashion to decry all lofty moral purpose, to disbelieve in public virtue, and to destroy all high excellence by a crushing disbelief in its excellence."

"That is to say," answered his uncle, calmly, "that Sir Robert knows the world, instead of imagining it: he deals with facts, not sentiments. But I will speak seriously, for it is a subject on which I wish you both to think and act. Look at the results of the Walpole administration—peace and prosperity. We are feared abroad, and tranquil at home. You may easily find finer theories than ours, but I appeal to our practice."

Norbourne remained in attentive silence; while his uncle's quick eye noted the impression he had made, and then continued: —

"You might do any thing with your unde-

cided neighbourhood, and your position points you out as its leader. Ah! I wish that you had the political eagerness of Sir Robert's younger son, Horace; who, hearing some one, during a dispute, say, 'Why, we have opinions enough on our side to form a sect!' exclaimed,—'But have you enough to form a party?'"

CHAPTER XI.

OPINIONS.

He scorned them from the centre of his heart,
For well he knew mankind; and he who knows
Must loathe or pity. He who dwells apart,
With books, and nature, and philosophy,
May lull himself with pity; he who dwells
In crowds and cities, struggling with his race,
Must daily see their falsehood and their faults,
Their cold ingratitude, their selfishness:
How can he choose but loathe them?

At any other time, Norbourne Courtenaye would have been delighted at his uncle's visit; which, had it been but six months sooner, would have presented a very different aspect. Lord Norbourne was one of those men who made it his boast, that he had succeeded in whatever he undertook. We beg his lordship's pardon; he never boasted of any thing: he knew Fortune too well to tempt her by a de-

fiance. No two people are more different in outward seeming, than a man sometimes grows to differ from himself. Twenty-five and fifty are epochs which bear no resemblance. In the reserved, cautious, yet bland and insinuating statesman, no one could have recognised the gay, wild, and extravagant young man that Lord Norbourne had once been. A younger brother, he had been the architect of his own fortunes; and having one's own way to make in the world is not the best possible method towards giving a good opinion of it. One by one Lord Norbourne had left behind him the generous belief, the warm affection, and the elevated sentiment. If he now thought at all about them, it was only to think how much, and how often, they had been imposed upon. The fault of his system was, that he gave the head an undue preponderance over the heart. It was the inevitable result of his experience: there are no weaknesses which we so thoroughly despise as those to which ourselves have yielded; and no faults strike us so forcibly as our own, when they are past.

The same process leads to different results. Sir Jasper Meredith hated mankind, Lord Norbourne only despised them; the one had exaggerated his feelings in solitude, the other had dispersed them in society; the one shrunk from his fellows, the other delighted in making them his tools: the sense of superiority was thus gratified in both. Sir Jasper undervalued worldly honours; Lord Norbourne even over-estimated their advantages. The difference lay in this: Sir Jasper had led a life of wild adventure in foreign lands; seeking excitement for excitement's sake; gaining riches by lucky chances; and, wearied out both in mind and body, sinking into solitude at last, while he gathered round him all the bitterest recollections of the past. Lord Norbourne, on the contrary, had led a life of business, in the same city and same court; he had taken his daily lessons in small intrigues for smaller ends.

The success and the disappointment alike belonged to the one aim — worldly success. He ended with being rich, a peer, and in the minister's confidence; while the insecurity

which, in a government like ours, attends political elevation, kept away any approach to satiety. He had not gone through life without learning its many bitter lessons; but the moral he drew from them was a sneer. Moreover, the habits of business are the most enduring of any; and Lord Norbourne's most positive enjoyment was in what are called the fatigues of office. Still he lingered in the country, and every day his nephew took greater delight in his society. There was something very flattering to the self-love of any young man in the easy confidence of one so distinguished, and usually so reserved. The polished misanthropy, too, of Lord Norbourne's sarcasm was delightful to one who felt in his own heart the deep enjoyment of disbelief.

It was an unusually mild and lovely evening that they were loitering on the banks of the lake. The sun was just setting — a conqueror as he went down; for every cloud that had flitted about during the day, now gathered on the west, mantling with crimson and gold. There was something triumphal in the rich

colouring that arrayed every object. The vivid green of the oaks stood out more distinct amid the scarlet of the sycamore and the yellow of the thyme, together with the rich brown that was covering the chestnuts. The grass, too, of the park was in strong contrast to the purple heath that clothed the distance, only broken by the blossoming furze, which intersected it like a golden sea: a faint perfume came on the air, more subtle even than the breath of flowers; it was like the last sigh of each falling leaf, that flitted by noiseless as a ghost.

To me there is no season so lovely as the autumn. There is a gaiety about the spring with which I have no sympathy: its perpetual revival of leaf and bloom is too great a contrast to the inner world, where so many feelings lie barren, and so many hopes withered. There is an activity about it, from which the wearied spirits shrink; and a joyousness, which but makes you turn more sadly upon yourself: but about autumn there is a tender melancholy inexpressibly soothing; decay is around, but such is in your own heart. There is a languor in the

air which encourages your own, and the poetry of memory is in every drooping flower and falling leaf. The very magnificence of its Assyrian array is touched with the light of imagination: even while you watch it, it passes away as your brightest hopes have done before.

The lake, on whose bank Courtenaye and his uncle were standing, was just then an object of singular beauty. The sky was reflected in its depths in huge masses of crimson shadow, which softened away into a deep purple mirror, clear and motionless, saving when the swans swept slowly across, leaving behind a vein of violet light.

"Can you," said Norbourne, "be quite insensible to the beauty of a scene like this? It enters into my very heart: I feel a kindlier disposition to the whole human race."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed Lord Norbourne, "I cannot go quite so far as that. I have, thanks to your hospitality, laid in a stock of health enough for the ensuing winter: but as to the general benevolence of which you talk, I confess I find no symptoms: if I did,

they would alarm me more than those of the gout."

"But, my dear uncle," asked his young hearer, "is it not a pleasanter thing to think well of one's species?"

"Pleasanter, I grant you," replied his uncle; "but one always pays for one's pleasures. Now I am arrived at an age when one grows economical on that head. I do not agree with Waller, who says,

> 'Surely the pleasure is as great
> In being cheated as to cheat.'

At all events, there is small enjoyment in being cheated with one's eyes open, which would be my present case. My opinion of my kind is couched in St. Simon's answer to Louis XIV.—'Is there any thing,' asked the king, 'that you despise more than men?' 'Yes,' replied the duke,—'woman.'"

"I had hoped," said Norbourne, "that you had some soft relentings in favour of the fairer sex."

"Not I," answered Lord Norbourne; "wo-

men have all our faults, heightened by a falsehood and inconsistency peculiarly their own. You may make a man understand his real interests; now, a woman you never can. Of all materials with which it may be my evil fate to work, I especially abjure and abhor the fanciful."

"Really, my dear uncle, you make me very uncomfortable," exclaimed Courtenaye, laughing. "Do you not even believe in love?"

"Yes," was the reply,—"as I do in the hooping-cough, or the measles; as a sort of juvenile disease to be got over as soon as possible. If young people would but consider,—a thing which young people never do,—they would find that love is its own cure. Gratified, it dies of satiety; ungratified, of forgetfulness. Let any man, in the course of a few years, look back upon the most desperate passion he ever experienced, and he will find himself not not only cured, but ashamed of it."

Norbourne walked on in silence: he felt too keenly to like to speak of his feelings. He shrank from mentioning his engagement to

his uncle. It was almost sacrilege to mention Ethel's name with a chance even of sarcasm or of blame.

> ——Cato's a proper person
> To intrust a love tale with!'

So he kept his thoughts "in their sweet silence;" and when Lord Norbourne returned to the house, long did he linger by that lonely lake, recalling a thousand looks and words which, lovely as they seemed at the time, grew even lovelier thus remembered. What impossible things inconstancy or indifference appeared to Norbourne! Never did young worshipper more devoutly believe in the divinity of love.

"For nothing in this wide world would I give up my sweet Ethel." It was almost like parting with herself when he left the lake-side.

CHAPTER XII.

DIFFICULTIES.

I do not ask to offer thee
  A timid love like mine;
I lay it, as the rose is laid,
  On some immortal shrine.

I have no hope in loving thee,
  I only ask to love;
I brood upon my silent heart,
  As on its nest the dove.

But little have I been beloved,
  Sad, silent, and alone;
And yet I feel, in loving thee,
  The wide world is mine own.

Thine is the name I breathe to Heaven,
  Thy face is on my sleep;
I only ask that love like this
  May pray for thee and weep.

Agreeable as Norbourne Courtenaye found his uncle's society, he could not but perceive that it operated, in some strange way, as a

restraint upon his mother. For the first time in her life she avoided all his attempts at obtaining an hour's quiet conversation. She kept herself almost entirely to her own apartments; and when she made her appearance at table, it was with a worn and haggard countenance, and a frame that her son could see wasting before his very eyes. All Lord Norbourne's efforts to draw her into conversation were vain: she would start and turn pale if he suddenly addressed her; though, the moment after she would recover herself, and evince absolute anxiety to address him. Norbourne was convinced that there was some secret; and the deep respect and affection he felt for a parent who had been every thing to him, made him reluctant to inquire into aught that she might wish concealed. Yet what possible mystery could there be? He was fretted and irresolute. Besides, what would Ethel think of his silence?

Another cause for embarrassment began to occasion him considerable uneasiness. He

found that the report of his marriage with his cousin was universal. That, however, was of small consequence, compared with a consciousness, that daily forced itself upon him, of a preference on the part of that cousin. It would be too cruel to encourage such a fancy for a moment. He could not but perceive that the faint colour never visited her pale cheek but when he spoke to her; that her eyes unconsciously followed him; and that the slightest opinion he expressed became, from that moment, hers.

One morning he had admired the perfume of a rare flower which she had in her hand. A taste for flowers had been among her few enjoyments, and her father had indulged this taste at a most lavish cost: the hot-house at Nourbourne Park was the admiration of the country. The next morning he found the room he deemed peculiarly his own, filled with plants of the same description. Constance had sent to the Park for them. There was nothing in the attention beyond that ready kindness which

is so essentially feminine; but the manner in which she received his acknowledgments was much: there was an embarrassment so far beyond the occasion, and a happiness not less obvious because it was rather betrayed than confessed. But Norbourne himself loved, and love has a ready sympathy with love.

Love is a new intelligence entered into the being; it is the softest, but the most subtle light; in all experience it deceives itself; but how many truths does it teach,—how much knowledge does it impart! It makes us alive to a thousand feelings, of whose very existence, till then, we had not dreamed. The poet's page has a new magic: we comprehend all that had before seemed graceful exaggeration; we now find that poetry falls short of what it seeks to express; and we take a new delight in the musical language that seems made for tenderness.

Even into philosophy is carried the deeper truth of the heart—and how many inconsistencies are at once understood! We grow

more indulgent, more pitying; and one sweet weakness of our own leads to so much indulgence for others. We doubt, however, whether the term weakness be not misapplied in this case. If there be one emotion that redeems our humanity by stirring all that is generous and unselfish within us, that awakens all the poetry of our nature, and that makes us believe in that heaven of which it bears the likeness, it is love: love, spiritual, devoted, and eternal; love, that softens the shadow of the valley of death, to welcome us after to its own and immortal home. Some Greek poet says,—"What does he know who has not suffered?" He might have asked,—"What does he know who has not loved?" Alas! both questions are synonymous. God help the heart that breaks with its after knowledge!

How sad seemed the lot of a young girl, touched by all the keen susceptibilities of youth, full of gentle and shrinking tenderness, fated to be unreturned! Nothing can com-

pensate to a woman for the want of exterior attraction. There is a nameless fascination about beauty, which seems, like all fairy gifts, crowded into one. It wins without an effort, and obtains credit for possessing every thing else. How many mortifications, from its very cradle, has the unpleasing exterior to endure! To be unloved—what a fate for a woman whose element is love!

Poor Constance was originally pretty: the outline of the features was still graceful, but long sickness had contracted, and given an expression of suffering; while all colouring had faded into a cold white. The eyes were heavy, and their naturally soft blue was dim and faded before its time. Her figure was slight; but the cruel accident—a fall in her childhood, which had laid the foundation of her ill health —had made her a little aside, and caused a degree of lameness, which rendered it difficult for her to move without assistance. The only positive beauty she possessed was a profusion of hair of the softest gold, which gave the

pale face around which it hung almost the likeness of a spirit. What a contrast to the bright and blooming image of Ethel Churchill, which was treasured in Norbourne's memory!

CHAPTER XIII.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

What mockeries are our most firm resolves!
To will is ours, but not to execute.
We map our future like some unknown coast,
And say, "Here is an harbour, here a rock —
The one we will attain, the other shun:"
And we do neither. Some chance gale springs up
And bears us far o'er some unfathomed sea.
Our efforts are all vain; at length we yield
To winds and waves, that laugh at man's control.

The next morning there was more restraint than usual at the breakfast-table. Norbourne was amazed that, though his mother had refused, on the excuse of a headach, his petition for an interview, she had afterwards received Lord Norbourne, and their conversation had lasted nearly two hours. That its effect had been a sleepless night, at least, to Mrs. Cour-

tenaye, was obvious from her haggard appearance; and her hand was so unsteady, that it was with difficulty she raised her cup to her lips. There was something, too, in Lord Norbourne's face that expressed anxiety; though his set brow, and contracted lip, marked determination. Scarcely did his quiet and restrained manner give outward sign of what was working within. He would have conversed as usual; but his attempts were so ill seconded, that he was fain to take refuge in the letters that lay beside him. Courtenaye himself was lost in thought. What could be the meaning of his mother's restraint and suffering — her reluctance to see himself? What could be the cause of estrangement between a parent and child, hitherto so united? One only cause presented itself. Could there be a second marriage in the case? But the thought was rejected even as it rose; it was like sacrilege: so haughty, so cold, so devoted to himself — it was impossible.

But Norbourne's was no temper to remain patient amid so much doubt and annoyance.

His unwillingness to urge any point upon which a mother he idolised seemed disinclined to enter, had hitherto kept him silent; but now silence seemed false delicacy, and he owed to himself to investigate the mystery which oppressed his once easy and happy home. He felt, too, that he was acting unjustly by Ethel: he had allowed a fortnight to elapse—he startled when he numbered up the days; it is strange how we allow them to glide imperceptibly away. He resolved no longer to delay the avowal of his engagement. Had his mother permitted it, she would have received his first confidence; as it was, to acknowledge his attachment became a duty to her who was now his first and dearest object.

With these thoughts passing in his mind, it may be supposed how much the cook's feelings would have been hurt, could she have known how the collared eels and raised pies, on which she had expended her utmost skill, were neglected.

Constance was the happiest one of the

party: accustomed to have her observations disregarded, her faculty of observation was but little cultivated; equally accustomed to silence, it was more natural in her eyes that people should not talk than that they should. It was enough for her to sit by her cousin's side, to breathe the air that he breathed, to catch his least look and lightest word. At even a little usual civility of the table from him she blushed; and if her eyes met his for a moment, they filled with light, which none who saw them at another time, spiritless and drooping, would have believed their faint azure could possess.

It was a beautiful feeling that which warmed the pale cheek of the youthful Constance. It was love in its gentlest, tenderest, and least earthly essence. It was hopeless; for, in her humility, she had never dreamed of return: it was unalloyed by any meaner motive of vanity or of interest, and surrendered its whole existence in a spirit of the purest and meekest devotion. The young and loving heart needed some ob-

ject of which it might dream in its many lonely hours, and on which it might lavish its great wealth of fresh and deep affection.

There is nothing to which you so soon become accustomed as to the presence of the beloved one; the gentle chain of habit easily becomes a sweet necessity. Constance had now lived a fortnight in the same house with her cousin, and it already seemed the most natural thing in the world to see him every day. This morning, however, her enjoyment was doomed to be curtailed; for she had scarcely finished her breakfast, before her father gently reminded her of a promise she had given to sort some letters for him.

"I shall make you quite my little secretary in time," said he, with one of his own peculiarly sweet smiles.

To Constance's affectionate temper, her father's kind look or word was more than enough to recompense any sacrifice, and she left even her cousin's side with almost gladness. Norbourne's whole attention was riveted on his mother. She all but started from her

seat when Lord Norbourne told his daughter to go; and, as Constance left the room, she rose with an intention of following, and then sat down, pale and trembling, as if she equally dreaded to stay or go.

"You are ill, my dearest mother!" exclaimed Norbourne, springing to her side.

Lord Norbourne rose also; and his movement seemed to recall Mrs. Courtenaye to herself. She rose calmly; and, saying to her son, —"I shall expect you in half an hour; I wish to have some conversation with you;" she, also, quitted the apartment.

Courtenaye thought the intermediate space a good opportunity of telling his uncle that his affections were irrevocably engaged. He had surmised, once or twice lately, that Lord Norbourne was not so careless of Constance as he seemed to be, and that the report of their marriage was not without his sanction. However painful the subject might be, the sooner any such idea was put an end to the better, for the sake of all parties.

"My mother has of late," said he, "been

as inaccessible as a minister of state, and I want to talk to her about my marriage."

"You are thinking, then, of the holy and blessed state, as it is called, of matrimony?—I guessed as much," replied his uncle. I have observed lately that you do not hear above half that is said to you; and the next thing that a young man loses, after his heart, is his hearing."

"There have been cases, I believe," returned Courtenaye, with a forced smile, "when a man has wished that the last-mentioned loss would continue."

"By the saffron robe of Hymen," cried Lord Norbourne, "but that would be a blessing! I own that I am no great friend to marriage in general; in nine cases out of ten, the opinion of the French poet, Marivaux, is mine also:—

'I would advise a man to pause
Before he take a wife;
Indeed, I own, I see no cause
He should not pause for life.'

If a young man has his way to make in the world, a wife is a dead weight upon his hands.

Indeed, I have looked upon the fable of Sisyphus as an allegory, and that his wife was the stone which so perpetually rolled back upon his hands, effectually retarding his weary progress up-hill."

Norbourne smiled, and remained silent, for nothing repels confidence so much as raillery: how can you be confiding, when your hearer is only witty? Lord Norbourne, however, continued speaking, and now more seriously.

" Situated as you are, my dear Courtenaye, the case is quite different; an heir is indispensable to an illustrious family, and your name entails upon you the necessity of a worthy alliance."

" My choice," interrupted Norbourne, " would do credit to any house."

" It is not for me to contradict you," said his uncle, with a politer bow than the occasion seemed to require.

" I am so glad of your approbation," exclaimed Courtenaye.

" You need never have doubted it," was the courteous reply; " Constance ——"

"Constance!" ejaculated Norbourne, "I ——"

"Ah! I see," interrupted Lord Norbourne, "that you think me even more ambitious than I am. I know that my heiress might look to the highest honours of the peerage, but I prefer yourself to the first duke in the land."

"But, my dear uncle," interrupted Norbourne,—

"No modesty, and no raptures," cried Lord Norbourne, as he turned to the door; "the pastoral and the heroic age are alike past away with me. Besides, your mother expects you; and I do not think that a lady ought to be kept waiting, unless it be at an assignation, and then it is an useful moral lesson."

The door closed after him, and his nephew felt that he had been completely outgeneraled. He now saw, what he had only suspected before, that his uncle wished him to marry Constance.

"Why put such nonsense into her head?" But, even while he spoke, he reproached him-

self: his very love for Ethel made him sensible how dreadful was the existence to which love came not.

"But," continued he, "she is young, gentle, —nay, sometimes almost pretty; she may yet find an unoccupied heart."

To this he might have added, that she was one of the first heiresses in England; but Norbourne was too young, and too enthusiastic, to balance interest and affection for one moment in the scales together. I believe all the good that is sometimes said of human nature when I remember the feelings of youth; and it is this principle explains why men, whose "hearts are dry as summer's dust," often delight in the society of the very young. The sympathy is awakened by memory.

Wallenstein exclaims of Max Piccolomini:

> "For, oh! he stood beside me like my youth."

The stern and worldly general saw in the young and ardent all that he had himself once been—generous, confiding, impatient of evil, confident of good, devoted and affec-

tionate: all these must have passed away from one whose career had been in courts and camps, where he had learned the falsehood of the one, and the indifference of the other. He saw himself in his youthful officer: such was he no longer; still it was pleasant to think that he had had in him so much of good.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONFESSION.

Life has dark secrets; and the hearts are few
That treasure not some sorrow from the world —
A sorrow silent, gloomy, and unknown,
Yet colouring the future from the past.
We see the eye subdued, the practised smile,
The word well weighed before it pass the lip,
And know not of the misery within:
Yet there it works incessantly, and fears
The time to come; for time is terrible,
Avenging, and betraying.

NORBOURNE paused, with an irresolution for which he himself could not account, as he approached the door of his mother's room.

The future has a more subtle sympathy with the present than our imperfect nature can analyse. Who has not felt that nameless shadow upon the spirit, which indicates the coming trouble as surely as the over-hanging

cloud foretells the thunderstorm? The external world is full of signs; and so is the internal, if we knew but how to trace them. There is the weight on the air before the tempest; there is the weight on the heart as the coming evil approaches.

Scorning himself for his folly, Courtenaye made an effort and opened the door; but, almost unconsciously to himself, he did it slowly and softly. He entered unperceived, and saw his mother prostrate before the cross; her face was buried in her hands, and the whole attitude bespoke humiliation and despair. It was as if she had dashed herself upon the floor in the last agony of an overburdened spirit, which seeks solace in prayer, and finds it not. Norbourne sprang to her side, and, raising her in his arms, exclaimed,—

"For God's sake, my beloved mother, let this mystery cease! Whatever be your sorrow, let your child share it. Can I do nothing for you?"

For the first time in her life, Mrs. Courtenaye let her head sink on her son's shoulder,

and burst into a passionate flood of tears. Strange, for a woman and a widow, it was the first time that he had seen her shed such. What must be the force of that grief which thus utterly subdued one so proud, and so self-controlled! Norbourne carried, rather than led her to a seat; and, lavishing upon her every tender and soothing epithet, implored her to tell him the worst. He was struck to see how she mastered herself. The sobs were swallowed down, the tears dashed aside; and, with one kindly pressure of the hand, she went to the inner room, saying, in a low but unbroken voice,—"In five minutes, my child."

Norbourne was left alone, and, insensibly, his eye was caught by the gloomy appearance of the room. The black hangings yet remained that had been put up at his father's death, but they were faded and somewhat torn. There was no carpet on the black oak floor, through whose crevices the wind came with that dreary sound which seems peculiar to it when it enters the dwelling of man. The

wind, amid the green leaves and the breathing flowers, goes its way in music; it is the sweet and mystic song of universal nature. But it enters into our dwellings, and it learns there the accent of pain; it breathes what it bears away — the sigh that tells, even in the midnight hours, of unrest, and the voice of lamentation, that speaks but in solitude. These echoes accumulate, and the house that has stood for years retains within its walls complaints long since lost in air: but the wind, that heard, recalls them; and there is a strange likeness to humanity in its murmurs, as it howls mournfully along the vaulted ceiling, or shrieks through the winding passages.

Its dreary influence was on Norbourne, though he knew it not, and added to the disconsolate effect of the chamber. He knew that it was his mother's sitting-room, and yet there was not a single object that indicated feminine taste or presence. Chair and table alike were of deal; and, from the damp appearance of the grate, where the fire scarcely struggled into warmth, he surmised, and truly,

that a fire was rarely lighted there. The only picture was the martyrdom of St. Sebastian; and Norbourne shuddered at the terrible truth, which gave so vivid a representation of torture. The crucifix, on which the Saviour was extended in his last agony, occupied a recess; and, beyond these, not an object caught the attention: all around depicted suffering and gloom.

But Norbourne had little time to dwell on the life of ascetic penance to which, it was obvious, his mother had condemned herself; for she came from the inner apartment. Stern must have been the mental discipline that had so banished all trace of emotion. Her clear olive cheek was pale, and the lip colourless; but so had they been for years. Perhaps the large black eyes had a brightness that had since left their thoughtful depths, but the scarely checked tears glistened on the eyelids. Her tall figure was drawn up to its utmost; and the long black flowing garments and veil might have suited the abbess of some strict and proud order, who had re-

nounced the world — its hopes, its feelings, and its vanities. But a nearer glance would have belied the first surmise. The lip was white, but it was tremulous; and human emotion was in the passionate paleness, and in the dark and glistening eyes. Mrs. Courtenaye took her seat; and, after a moment's silence, said — but the voice was hollow and constrained through all its effort at calmness,—

"I wished, my dear Norbourne, to express my entire approval of your marriage with your cousin ——"

"My marriage with my cousin," interrupted Norbourne, "will never take place. My uncle is so accustomed to arrange every body's affairs for them, that he forgets that I am the first person to be consulted in an affair like this. I admire and like my uncle, but will not be dictated to. Once for all, my dear mother, I will not marry Constance Courtenaye."

"Think," exclaimed his mother, eagerly, "on the advantages of the alliance. You

know very well that your estate, fine as it is, is burdened by heavy mortgages, which Constance's noble fortune would at once redeem."

"And, by the sacrifice of all my best feelings and dearest hopes, I might," cried Norbourne, "command a few luxuries to which I am perfectly indifferent."

"You are wrong," replied Mrs. Courtenaye:" luxury is but a trifle—not so power and position. With an unencumbered estate, you take the first place in the county; you obtain the finest field for the exertion of your talents; and England has no distinction to which you may not reasonably aspire."

"But I am not ambitious," returned Norbourne.

"It is what every man ought to be," interrupted his mother. "I should, from my inmost soul, despise any one who, with your advantages, could voluntarily sit down to a country life of indolent seclusion."

"I have no such idea," replied her son; "but my future does not depend on my marrying my cousin."

"It does, it does!" interrupted Mrs. Courtenaye, vehemently.

"You overvalue the advantages of the alliance," said Norbourne; "but, even were they tenfold, it would be of no avail to urge them upon me. My heart, my faith, are pledged to another."

"Do not tell me so!" almost shrieked his listener. "Norbourne, I charge you, by your mother's blessing, to marry your cousin — I command, I entreat you!"

Norbourne stood startled into silence by her sudden vehemence: it was but for a moment; and he continued, calmly, but kindly,—

"My mother's command would be sacred in any matter less intimately connected with my happiness and my honour."

"They cannot," said Mrs. Courtenaye, with such utter sadness of tone that Norbourne started at the sound, "be dearer to yourself than they are to me. Do not, for some foolish fancy ——"

"Nay," interrupted Courtenaye, "I would not present to you a daughter unworthy of

yourself. The fortune, the family, of Miss Churchill are equal to my own; and as to herself ——"

"Do not talk of her!" exclaimed his mother. "I implore you, think of the claims that your cousin has on your forbearance — your pity: she loves you."

Norbourne coloured, and then said, gravely, — "I do not wish to hear this, even from you. My cousin's feelings are too delicate for even our confidence."

"You are content, then, to repay the affection you have yourself inspired with the coldest ingratitude?" asked Mrs. Courtenaye.

"My dearest mother," cried the youth, "your desire for my advantageous settlement makes you unjust. You know well that nothing in my conduct has ever authorised Constance to fancy that I looked upon her but as a relative."

"And can you bear to think," replied Mrs. Courtenaye, "on the misery you have inflicted on that young and innocent heart? She loves you simply, earnestly, unconsciously; her

whole life is bound up in yours: she will die, Courtenaye — die of a broken heart."

"You press me too hardly," exclaimed her son; "there is one as young—and oh, how fair! — who has intrusted her destiny to my keeping. I have sought in vain the opportunity of telling you — of imploring your consent: I do now. I cannot marry my cousin, for I love another."

"Oh, Norbourne! oh, my own beloved child!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenaye, wringing her hands with a passionate gesture of entreaty, — "have you no love for me? This affection is of but a few months' growth: will you weigh it against that which has cherished you for years? My son, have pity upon your mother! I will never consent to your marrying any but your cousin — for my sake consent."

"My dearest mother," cried Norbourne, "is it possible that worldly advantages can so far blind your judgment? Do you know what it is to love — to feel how unutterably dear the presence of another can be — to know that all life could offer were valueless without

her — to hope, to fear, to think, only for her beloved sake?"

"Hush, hush!" said his mother; "this is a boy's vain passion: will you weigh it against your mother's love? Norbourne, few mothers have ever loved a child as I have loved you. You have been my all—my world: night after night I have watched your sleep; your little head was never cradled near any heart but my own — ay, and more, for your sake I have sinned against myself. I know the falsehood of the faith in which you have been brought up, yet never have I sought to divert you from it: it led to power and honour in your native land. On my head, I said, let the sin rest. These walls could tell how the penance of midnight has expiated my fault. Choose, Norbourne, between your mistress and your mother — between my blessing and my curse."

Norbourne was less affected by this passionate appeal than might be supposed. He was the most struck by what appeared his mother's extreme unreasonableness. She had

not brought forward one rational objection, nor one argument beyond his interests. It appeared to him that she had allowed her imagination to gain an undue sway from the solitude in which she had lived. The idea of a marriage between himself and his cousin had been dwelt upon till it reigned paramount, and she could not even comprehend that there was another side to the question.

Impressed with this belief, he rose; and said to his mother, in a kind, but determined tone, " I will not now prolong an interview which so agitates you. Think over the subject, my dearest mother; and, after I have spoken to my uncle, I will return."

" Speak to your uncle! Stop!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenaye, grasping his arm with a convulsive force, of which her thin white fingers did not seem capable; while her fine features were convulsed by some strong, though still suppressed emotion: " rash boy, you rush upon your fate! You shall not — must not leave this room to meet your uncle, unless it be to tell him that you marry his daughter."

"Mother," said Norbourne, startled by her manner, "I will not, indeed, leave the room till you tell me the meaning of all this. My uncle has no right to influence my actions: I am independent of him."

"No, no, you are not independent of him; every thing you have," interrupted Mrs. Courtenaye, "hangs upon his will. Come hither to the window, boy,"—and she drew him after her with the unnatural strength of a moment's excitement: "look there!"

Norbourne mechanically gazed from the casement; and nature, so strong in her loveliness, for an instant caught his attention. The golden light that bathed the richly-coloured woods, and warmed the purple distance of the hills, was in strong contrast to the cold and gloomy chamber in which he stood: but such tranquil beauty has no influence on an hour of strong emotion; and he turned away, to question of his mother's face.

"Look from the window," said she, in a hoarse whisper; "do you see the turrets of our old house fling their shadows on the grass

below? Do you see the fields and woods around? They now call you master. I tell you, that one word of your uncle's, and they are gone from you for ever. If you do not marry his daughter, he speaks that word."

Norbourne heard her words: he made no answer, for at first he doubted that he had heard aright. Then a terrible fear of his mother's sanity crossed his mind; but there was that in her face which allowed no question of her intellect.

"I know not," at last he exclaimed, "what strange mystery thus gives my birthright over to another; but this I know, though it be in his power to alienate from me every rood of that which is my rightful inheritance, I will not wed his daughter. Two things are yet left me — my honour and my name."

Mrs. Courtenaye's hand yet rested on that of her son; he felt the cold shudder which passed through her, and he saw the drops stand on her high white brow.

"Not even that!" said she; and he started

at the faint hollowness of her voice. "Refuse to wed Constance, and you are with neither house, nor land, nor name!"

"What do you mean, madam?" exclaimed he, in a tone as strange and altered as her own; "am I not the son of the late Mr. Courtenaye — am I not your son?"

Both stood silent, each with a fixed and fascinated gaze on the other: she, with a face worn with a sorrow borne for many years — wan, emaciated, and on whose still fine features suffering wrought like physical pain; he, with all the hope and bloom of youth smitten by a sudden blow — pale as death, and yet with lip and brow curved as if they defied the very agony that wrung the blood from the heart.

"Am I," asked the youth, slowly, but with a voice so changed that it came unfamiliar to the ear even of his mother,—"am I the son of Mr. Courtenaye?"

"You are," replied his mother — and she leaned against the wall for support; while the

blood, that had curdled at her heart for years, rushed over face, throat, and hands, for a moment, and then left her even more deadly pale than before,—" but I was not his wife."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONSENT.

It is the past that maketh my despair;
The dark, the sad, the irrevocable past.
Alas! why should our lot in life be made,
Before we know that life? Experience comes,
But comes too late. If I could now recall
All that I now regret, how different
Would be my choice! at best a choice of ill;
But better than my miserable past.
Loathed, yet despised, why must I think of it?

The bitterness of death was upon the unfortunate young man: he stood gazing from the window, but seeing nothing. He felt stunned—mortification, sorrow, and anger, mingled together: the past was like a dream, and the future swam indistinctly before him. The first object that roused him was the sight of his mother, who still leaned against the wall for support, her stately figure bowed in an attitude

of hopeless misery; and her pale hands hung down as if she had not power to raise them even to dash away the few tears, the one or two drops, that overflowed her fixed and dilated eyes. Norbourne saw how worn and wan they were: he caught them in his; and, pressing them to his lips, exclaimed,—

"My poor mother! I ask not of the past: I know you have suffered — that you suffer far more than I do. To me you have ever been the kindest, the best, the dearest. Let my uncle do his worst, we will leave this together."

"You will marry Constance," exclaimed she, "and save us both from the misery of disclosure?"

Norbourne's brow darkened.

"It were dishonour in me to yield. I will not play the part of an impostor, whom my uncle must despise even while he screens. No; these estates are his right: let him take them; I will not buy them with his daughter's hand."

"Not for your own sake, but for mine,"

said Mrs. Courtenaye, " do I implore you to consent. My life and death are in your hands; for never would I survive the disgrace of a discovery."

" It is somewhat late to think of this," exclaimed Norbourne, bitterly. The word was repented as spoken: " My dearest mother, you urge me too far."

" Norbourne," said she earnestly, almost calmly, " listen to my story; and you will then find it is not even the harshest justice that you measure upon my ill-fated head."

She returned to her seat by the fire, and, pointing to a chair near, made one strong effort at self-control, and began as follows:

" I was but sixteen when I met your father; yet even then I had known sorrow. My parents had both died within my recollection, and left me to guardians, who, only intent on securing my fortune, used every means to induce me to follow a religious life. They forced me into a convent, whence your father rescued me; and that evening I was married to him — ay, married. A daughter of my noble house

could not have stooped to a love unsanctified by duty. We were married according to the rites of my own faith,—a faith I still hold as sacred as it was once held in this recreant land.

"We had many dangers and difficulties to encounter; and it was months before we reached England in safety. Alas! you were born before that time; and, as I learned too late, our differing faiths made our marriage illegal. He was only my husband before his God and his honour. He should have thought of them before he disgraced the woman who never wronged him by a doubt, and the child whose very existence was his own. I learned the truth, but would never consent to a second marriage. It could not do you justice; and, for myself, I needed none. I stood acquitted by my own conscience. I had not transgressed the laws of God; and the laws of men, what were they?—founded on the party and the policy of the moment. None knew the secret but Mr. Courtenaye's brother, and till now he has held it inviolable. But I know Lord Norbourne well; he would sacrifice his life

for the success of a favourite project. Tell me that you will marry Constance: save me from shame—from death!"

Norbourne stood silent and irresolute. Ethel and his mother rose confusedly together; but Mrs. Courtenaye could not bear the suspense. She sprang from her seat—she threw herself at her son's feet, and, resisting all his attempts to raise her, exclaimed, while she clasped his knees with passionate vehemence,—"Never, never will I rise till you promise to save me from all I most loathe and fear! Must I be made a by-word and a scorn? The days of my youth and beauty to be remembered only to tell how fair I was as Courtenaye's mistress! To become the subject of the pity I have so despised! Norbourne, you are your father's representative; you owe me some atonement: at your hands I ask the name and fame which your father risked in his selfish passion. The God whose shrine I deserted for earthly affection is terribly avenged. My husband deceived—my son deserts me; but you cannot, Norbourne, aban-

don to shame the mother who watched your cradle. It is my life I ask — I will not survive the disgrace!"

"Mother," said Norbourne, in a hoarse whisper, "tell Lord Norbourne from me, I will marry his daughter."

CHAPTER XVI.

A LONDON LIFE.

The poet's lovely faith creates
  The beauty he believes;
The light which on his footsteps waits,
  He from himself receives.

His lot may be a weary lot;
  His thrall a heavy thrall;
And cares and griefs the crowd know not,
  His heart may know them all:

But still he hath a mighty dower,
  The loveliness that throws
Over the common thought and hour
  The beauty of the rose.

Existence is full of strange contrasts. The wheel of life whirls round, and leaves us scarcely time to know where we are before we find ourselves in a totally different position. The material is always much the same,—pride, vanity, deceit, and selfishness; but it is worked up into very different shapes.

A few weeks ago, Walter Maynard was pensively dreaming away existence to the

music of a woodland brook, or in the soft shadows of the falling leaves. He was enjoying the most delicious hour of a poet's life — that consciousness of power which indicates its possession; but a consciousness unembittered by the harsh realities of its after-struggles into actual life. In this one charmed hour is all that afterwards constitutes poetry: at once poetry and its prophecy, it is the Aurora of the mind,

> "Fille de la jour,
> Qui naquit avant son père."

But he had left the green wood, and the thousand inspirations of the wild flowers, and the shadows that flit athwart the drooping boughs, for scenes whose inspirations were thought, toil, and suffering. The clock of St. Mary had just tolled one, and the neighbourhood around was hushed in profound repose. Every window was darkened excepting one; and there a faint light burned steadily. Night after night it burned till it mingled with the chill white light of morning.

There has always been to me something

inexpressibly touching in the single taper burning through the long and lonely hours of silence and sleep. It must mark some weary vigil; one, perhaps, by the sick couch, where rests the pale face on which we dread every moment to look our last. How the very heart suspends its beating in the hushed stillness of the sick chamber! what a history of hopes, fears, and cares, are in its hours! How does love then feel its utter fondness and its helplessness! How is the more active business of the outward world forgotten in the deep interest of the hushed world in those darkened walls!—a look, a tone, a breath, is there of vital importance. With what tender care the cup is raised to the feverish lip; with what intense anxiety the colour is watched on the wasted cheek! How are the pulses counted on the thin hand, and sometimes in vain!

Again, that lonely taper, how often is it the companion and sign of studies for which the day is too short—studies that steal the gloss from the sunny hair, and the light from the over-taxed eye!

Walter Maynard is bending over a little table, while the rapid pen is slow in putting down the thoughts that crowd upon him. His cheek is flushed with eagerness, and the red lip is curved with triumph. It does not suit the scene around; but from that the mind of the young poet is far, far away. There was that desolate air about the chamber which is peculiar to an ill-furnished London room: cities need luxuries, were it only to conceal the actual. In the country, an open window lets in at once the fair face of heaven: the sunshine has its own cheerfulness; the green bough flings on the floor its pleasant shade; and the spirit sees, at a glance, the field and the hedge where the hawthorn is in bloom. Not so in a town: there smoke enters at the casement; and we look out upon the darkened wall, and the narrow street, where the very atmosphere is dull and coarse. Its gloomy influence is on all.

The room where Walter was seated writing was one that any, who had looked inside for a moment, must have known could only have

belonged to a town. The floor was blackened, as were the unpapered walls. The curtains, thin and scanty, had long merged their original red into a dusky brown. Ornaments there were none, for the crooked mirror could scarcely be called such: you started back at your own face, so grim was the shadow thrown over it, so rough was the complexion reflected. The dust had lain on its surface so long that it had become part even of the glass. A fire burned in the grate; but it rather indicated its presence by smoke, which stole forth in occasional puffs, than by its warmth.

The air which the young student breathed was bitter with the vapour that had gradually gathered around him. His hands, small and delicate as a woman's, had long since assumed that dead white which marks extreme cold. Still he wrote on. He was too much engrossed in his own charmed employ not to be insensible for a time to all external influences: he might suffer afterwards, but now his mind was his kingdom. Ever and anon the cheek wore a deeper crimson, and the dark

eyes filled with sudden fire, as he felt the idea clothe itself in words tangible to the many, as its bodiless presence had previously been to himself. Solitary, chilled, and weary, yet the young poet hung over his page, on which was life, energy, and beauty; and under such, or similar circumstances, have been written those pages to which the world owes so much. A history of how and where works of imagination have been produced, would be more extraordinary than even the works themselves. Walter Maynard is but a type of his class.

The life of the most successful writer has rarely been other than of toil and privation; and here I cannot but notice a singularly absurd "popular fancy," that genius and industry are incompatible. The one is inherent in the other. A mind so constituted has a restlessness in its powers, which forces them into activity. Take our most eminent writers, and how much actual labour must have been bestowed on their glorious offerings at the altar of their country, and their fame! What a godlike thing that fame is! Think what it is

to be the solace of a thousand lonely hours — to cheer the weary moments of sickness, to fling a charm around even nature. How many are there to whom, in long after years, your name will come like a note of music, who will love and honour you, because you have awakened within them thoughts and feelings which stir the loftiest dreams and the sweetest pulses of their nature! The poet's life is one of want and suffering, and often of mortification — mortification, too, that comes terribly home; but far be it from me to say, that it has not its own exceeding great reward. It may be late in coming, but the claim on universal sympathy is at last allowed. The future, glorious and calm, brightens over the grave; and then, for the present, the golden world of imagination is around it. Not an emotion of your own beating heart, but it is recorded in music.

Walter Maynard felt neither his poverty nor his seclusion. He was living in the old heroic time; the brave and the beautiful were at his side, while he gave them high words,

fitting their high converse. On the heroine of his play he dwelt with the passionate fondness of a lover: there the real mingled with the ideal: could he write of love, and not think of Ethel Churchill? She was the Egeria of his heart, who taught him all the truth of tenderness. If there be poetry in this world, it is in the depths of an unrequited and an imaginative passion — pure, dreaming, sacred from all meaner cares and lower wishes; asking no return, but feeling that life were little to lavish on the beloved one. Often and often did Walter's dark eyes glisten as he poured his whole soul in some strain of tender eloquence, which he knew must touch the heart of woman. "She will read it;" that little phrase — what hope, what happiness, has it not given!

Walter had been spared some of the difficulties attendant on a young writer's first efforts in London, by the kindness of Sir Jasper Meredith, whose letter of introduction to his bookseller had been more efficacious than such things usually are. The fact was,

he had written another, repeating his commendations, and saying that he would be responsible for any expenses incurred in bringing any early productions before the public. Of this fact Walter was in complete ignorance, and himself was astonished at his own good fortune, in having his pamphlet and poems so readily received. In the meantime, he shut himself in obscure lodgings, and pursued his labours with the industry that hope gives to a pursuit.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER LONDON LIFE.

A pretty, rainbow sort of life enough;
Filled up with vanities and gay caprice:
Such life is like the garden at Versailles,
Where all is artificial; and the stream
Is held in marble basins, or sent up
Amid the fretted air, in waterfalls;
Fantastic, sparkling; and the element,
The mighty element, a moment's toy;
And, like all toys, ephemeral.

PLEASURE lasts for ever, but enjoyment does not: the reason is, that the one lies around, and perpetually renews itself; but the other lies within, and exhausts itself. Lady Marchmont was at the pleasantest stage of both. At first, all things are new, and most things delightful. Vanity, novelty, and excitement, at once the graces and fates of society, were

all in attendance upon her. A few weeks made her a reigning toast; verses were written, and glasses broken, in her honour; and it was an undecided thing, whether the Duke of Wharton wore her chains, or those of Lady Wortley. One day would suffice to tell the history of many.

> "When sleepless lovers just at twelve awake,"

she awakened also. Chocolate came in those fairy cups of Indian china, which made the delight of our grandmothers, and whose value was such, that the poet satirist considered their loss to be the severest trial to a woman's feelings — *alias,* her temper; while to be

> "Mistress of herself, though China fall,"

was held an achievement almost too great for feminine philosophy. Chocolate then enabled the languid beauty to go through the duties of her toilette. Notes were read, laces looked over, the last new verses looked over with them; perhaps, a page read from the last French romance — the mind a little disturbed from its heroic sorrows by the consideration,

whether the next set of new bodkins should be of silver or pearl. Then it was to be decided what ribands would suit the complexion; whether the gazer would have to exclaim,—

> "In her the beauties of the spring are seen,
> Her cheek is rosy, and her gown is green;"

or whether he would have to soar a yet higher flight, and cry,—

> "In her the glory of the heaven we view,
> Her eyes are starlike, and her mantle blue."

Then the patches had to be placed—patches full of sentiment, coquetry, and bits of opinions as minute as themselves. Essences and powder had to be scattered together, and Henrietta's long black tresses gathered into a mass which might fairly set all the orders of architecture at defiance. Lastly came the hoop, and, with scarf and fan,

> "Conscious Beauty put on all her charms."

Friends began to drop in. One came with intelligence of a sale, where the most divine things in the world were to be had for no-

thing, or next to it — that *next to it*, by the by, is usually a very sufficient difference. Another came fresh from an Indian house, where silks and smiles, fans and flirtations, Chinese monsters and lovers, made the most delightful confusion possible. Ah, those Indian warehouses made the morning pass in a charming manner! many a soft confession was whispered over a huge china jar; many a heart has succumbed to a suite of mother-of-pearl card-box and counters; and as to the shawls, why, the whole feminine world has long ago acknowledged them to be irresistible. To one or other of these Lady Marchmont was usually hurried away; occupied with bargains,

> "Bought, because they may be wanted —
> Wanted, because they may be had."

Then came the walk on the Mall, with as many cavaliers in her wake as there are bubbles in the track of the stately swan; each with sigh and compliment equally ready-made. Heavens, but the classic deities did see service in those days! Juno, Venus, and the

Graces, do, certainly, round off a sentence ; and the very common-place is redeemed by a fine world of olden poetry, that nothing can quite destroy.

There is an exquisite vein of flattery running through our ancient masters of song: when they wished to paint their mistress's charms, all nature was compelled into the sweet services. How fine is Dryden's

> " In the far land of pleasant Thessalie,
> Uprose the sun, and uprose Emily !"

How sweet Donne's parting prayer to her who would fain have companioned him, a gentle page,—

> " When I'm away, dream me some happiness ;"

or the sea-captain's petition to his unknown mistress,—

> " Tell me thy name, fair saint,
> That I may call upon it in a storm,
> And save some ship from perishing ;"

or, to conclude with Carew's picturesque belief,

> " Ask me no more where June bestows,
> When spring is gone, the fading rose;
> For in her beauty's orient deep
> Those flowers, as in their causes, sleep."

These days of romantic gallantry had somewhat waned: but enough of the high-toned and classic remained to make the charming things then said very charming indeed; and never were they poured in a fairer ear than in Lady Marchmont's; nor, it must be confessed, in one more ready to receive them.

Night came, with that increase of gaiety which has always been night's peculiar privilege — perhaps on the principle of contrast. Monday, it was the ridotto; Tuesday, the opera; Wednesday, Ranelagh; Thursday, the play; Friday, a ball; Saturday, a rout, or else a little of all these blended together. What a sensation was produced the first night of her appearance in the stage-box! One line in the play was,

> " I look upon her face, and think of heaven;"

and how many white gloves at once addressed the line and their applause together to herself. No wonder that Lady Marchmont began to wonder whether paradise and London were not synonymous terms.

One morning, while

> "Watching the dumb devotion of her glass,"

in came Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who caught both her hands, and cried, laughing,—"Yield yourself my prisoner—rescue or no rescue!"

"Why," replied Henrietta, "the fashion of wearing your ladyship's chains is too universal for me to resist it."

"There is a good child! and now come and do as I bid you. We have improvised the most charming party imaginable. The summer has come back by surprise. I own I wonder that June was not tired of us: still here is a day so sunny, that October does not know its own. The Duke of Wharton, Lord Hervey, and some two or three others, have designed a water-party in our honour. We are

to go and see Pope's new grotto, opened for the first time; then try Hampton Court, and see if Mrs. Howard will stake a little princely gold on a pool of basset."

Lady Marchmont was delighted; and a little time saw them

"Sailing the bosom of the silver Thames."

There were several besides, but a *partie quarrée* was formed at their end of the boat, by herself, Lady Mary, the duke, and Lord Hervey. The ladies were on their best looks, the gentlemen on their best manners; and manner in the one sex is equivalent to look in the other. The two fair dames were sufficiently jealous of the glory of conquest; and the two cavaliers sufficiently undecided, to give a due degree of piquancy to exertion; and it must be allowed that each was worth the trouble of pleasing.

Lady Mary was in the zenith of her beauty; and, as it was a beauty that had always rested on feature and expression, the first bloom was scarcely missed. She caught the attention at once, but she was more likly to attract than

to fix. The bright dark eyes were restless, and the lip had smiles more sarcastic than sweet; and there was a pretty defiance in her air, which piqued rather than interested. Her dress was picturesque, but careless, and would not have suited any one but herself; and her manners were in exact keeping with her face and costume;—they were at once indifferent and flattering: she exacted much attention, but she also bestowed much; and there was a brilliant uncertainty in her conversation, which gave it a peculiar charm. None could tell whether the next sentence was to be a compliment or an epigram. She talked much, and enjoyed talking; and, obviously, did not dislike a little *tracasserie*. Scandal, with her, did not lose any of its usual snowball propensities, of gathering as it went.

Next her sat the Duke of Wharton, in an attitude ingeniously indolent. He had that air, so English, and yet so impossible to define — high-bred. To-day his toilette was simple to affectation: he had resolved, he said, not to have a care in the world, and he began

by dismissing the most important. His figure was good, but slight; and with singular grace in all its movements. His finely cut features were capable of every variety of expression; they were, to use a French epithet, expressive as their epithets for all social qualities usually are, *mobile* in the extreme. They needed the passing animation of the moment; for, when in a state of repose, there was something wanting. The face did not interest; you noted in it a certain contraction of forehead, and an indecision about the mouth, which indicated, surely enough, Wharton's character. It was like a fairy tale, in which the good fairies assemble round the infant's cradle, and lavish upon it all the choicest gifts. Suddenly, some old and malicious magician appears, and destroys the effect of all these fine qualities by some one evil addition.

The curse to Philip Wharton was the same that Jacob pronounced over Reuben on his death-bed: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." To-day he was

> "Captive, in Cytherea's bower,
> To Beauty and her train;"

to-morrow engaged in some dark intrigue, whose intricacy was its chief charm: and still, whether as lover or politician, diverted from his first aim by some other object.

> "Thus, on the sands of Afric's burning plains,
> Though deeply made, no long impress remains.
> The slightest leaf can leave its figure there,
> The strongest form is scattered by the air."

What the Duke of Wharton wanted was passion — passion, which alone gives intensity to the purpose, and constancy to the pursuit. He knew no feeling stronger than excitement, and looked for nothing beyond amusement. His friends could not rely upon him, but his foes could; they might be sure that his resentment would, like all his undertakings, only go half way.

On the other side was Lord Hervey, a slight, fair young man, dressed — oh, ye gods! — invention enough for an epic must have gone to complete that toilette! It involved

the peace of mind of " a whole sex of queens;" it was too destructive, and such Lord Hervey felt himself to be: his voice to a woman took a tone of tender pity, as if he compassionated his conquests. He never talked about any thing but himself; because he was persuaded that, in so doing, he chose the most attractive subject to his listeners. His horse, his dog, his every thing that was his, had a peculiar charm, from the mere fact of belonging to him. He was clever, and yet did the most absurd things, only because he believed that *his* doing them redeemed the absurdity.

It was a lovely day; for, say what they will, England does see the sunshine sometimes. Indeed, I think that our climate is an injured angel: has it not the charm of change, and what charm can be greater? That morning the change was a deep blue sky, with a few large clouds floating over it; a sun which turned the distant horizon into a golden haze; and a soft west wind, that seemed only sent to bring the sound of the French horns in the boat that followed their own. As they passed

along Chelsea Reach, the bells of the church were ringing merrily.

"Why, that is a wedding peal!" cried the Duke of Wharton; "and it puts me in mind that Miss Pelham and Sir John Shelley are just going to enter the holy and blessed state."

"Yes," replied Lady Mary, "and I never knew a marriage with a greater prospect of happiness—she will be a widow in six weeks!"

"Well," said Lady Marchmont, "you carry your connubial theory even further than in your last ballad :—

> 'My power is passed by like a dream,
> And I have discovered too late,
> That whatever a lover may seem,
> A husband is what we must hate.'"

Lady Mary smiled very graciously; she almost forgave Henrietta for looking so well: to have one's own verses learned by heart, and gracefully quoted, is more than poetical nature can resist.

"For my part," continued the Duke of Wharton, "I hold that the connubial system of this country is a complete mistake. The

only happy marriages I ever heard of are those in some Eastern story I once read, where the king marries a new wife every night, and cuts off her head in the morning."

" It would suit your grace, at all events," replied Lady Mary ; " you who are famed for being to one thing constant never."

" Well," exclaimed Lord Hervey, who had appeared to be absorbed in watching his own shadow on the water, " I do not think it is such a dreadful thing to be married. It is a protection, at all events."

> " ' Thou, who so many favours hast received,
> Wondrous to tell, and hard to be believed !' "

cried Lady Mary : " and so, like the culprits of old, you are forced to take refuge from your pursuers at the altar."

" For pity's sake," ejaculated the duke, " do let us talk of some less disagreeable subject."

" Fie, your grace !" exclaimed Lady Mary. " Disagreeable subject ! Lord Hervey was only, as usual, talking of himself."

The whole party were silent for some minutes. After all, wit is something like sunshine in a frost — very sharp, very bright, but very cold and uncomfortable. The silence was broken by Lady Marchmont exclaiming,— "How fine the old trees are! there is something in the deep shadow that they fling upon the water, that reminds me of home."

"I am not sure," answered the duke, "that I like to be reminded of any thing. Let me exist intensely in the present—the past and future should be omitted from my life by express desire."

"What an insipid existence!" replied Henrietta, — "no hopes, and no fears."

"Ah! forgive me," whispered Wharton, "if the present moment appear to me a world in itself."

"I," said Lord Hervey, "do not dislike past, present, nor future. Like woman, they have all behaved very well to me. The past has given me a great deal of pleasure; the present is with you; and as to the future,

such is the force of example, that I doubt not it will do by me as its predecessors have done."

"Truly," cried Lady Mary, "the last new comedy that I saw in Paris must have modelled its hero from you: let me recommend you to adopt two of its lines as your motto:—

'J'ai l'esprit parfait—du moins je le crois;
Et je rends grace au Dieu de m'avoir créé—moi!'"

"It is very flattering to be so appreciated," answered Lord Hervey, with the most perfect nonchalance.

"What an affecting thing," said Lady Mary, "was the death of Lord Carleton! He died as he lived, holding one hand of the fair Duchess of Queensberry; who, with the other, was feeding him with chicken. What an example he gave to his sex! he was equally liberal with his diamonds and his affections."

"*L'un vaut bien l'autre,*" said Lady Marchmont.

"I shall set off for Golconda to-morrow," cried Wharton.

"Don't!" interrupted Lady Mary; "it would be too mortifying, when you came back, to find how little we had missed you."

"Oh, you would miss me," returned he, laughing, "precisely because you ought not. I hope that you have heard the proposed alteration in the commandments at the last political meeting at Houghton? Hanbury suggested that the 'not' should, in future, be omitted; but Doddington objected, as people might leave off doing wrong if it became a duty. At all events, they would not steal, covet, and bear false witness against their neighbour, with half the relish that they do at present."

"Ah," replied Lady Mary, "we make laws, and we follow customs. By the first we cut off our own pleasures; and by the second, make ourselves answerable for the follies of others."

"Well, Lady Mary," replied Wharton,

"we have now arrived where you, and you only, give the laws — yonder is our poet's residence."

The boat drew to the side, and the gay party stepped upon the bank.

CHAPTER XVIII.

POPE'S VILLA.

I say not, regret me; you will not regret;
You will try to forget me, you cannot forget;
We shall hear of each other, ah, misery to hear
Those names from another which once were so dear!

But deep words shall sting thee that breathe of the past,
And many things bring thee thoughts fated to last;
The fond hopes that centered in thee are all dead,
The iron has entered the soul where they fed.

Of the chain that once bound me, the memory is mine,
But my words are around thee, their power is on thine;
No hope, no repentance, my weakness is o'er,
It died with the sentence—I love thee no more!

It was a very bit of Arcadia, the scene that the lawn presented. A few late flowers lingered among the shrubs, and the rich colouring on the autumnal foliage supplied the place of bloom. The garden was laid out with exquisite taste, and the groups scattered around seemed animated with the spirit of the place; for they placed themselves in little knots, just

where they were calculated to produce the best effect. There was an elegant collation ready; and, while Pope talked of

"His humble roof, and poet's fare,"

he had neglected nothing that could please his assembled guests. To Lady Marchmont he was the most interesting object of all, though all his *petits soins* were addressed to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who received them with that encouraging coquetry born of flattered vanity.

Flattery is like champagne, it soon gets into the head; but in Pope's flattery there was too much of the heart. Long after hours of neglect and mortification dearly atoned for that morning's pleasant delusion. There is something in genius for which Fate demands severe atonement. In some things Pope's was an exception to the general lot. He dwelt in that "lettered ease" to which his own taste gave refinement; his talents pined in no long obscurity, but early reached their just appreciation; his friends were those whose friendship

is honour, and he lived in a very court of personal homage and flattery. But fortune only neglected to do what nature had already done. Dwarfed from his birth, that slender frame was tenanted by acute physical ills; which, acting upon a mind even more sensitive than his body, made life one long scene of irritation and suffering. The fingers were contracted by pain that yet gave the sweetest music to their page: satire was at once his power (and the sense of power is sweet to us all) and his refuge.

The passion and melancholy of one or two poems just suffice to shew what a world of affection and sentiment was checked and subdued, because their indulgence had been only too painful; but to-day was to be as flowing as his own verses: he was at her side on whom he lavished so much passionate and graceful flattery; and Lady Mary paid him back,—not in kind, for his heart went with his words, but hers was "only sweet lip-service."

There is a cruelty in feminine coquetry, which is one of nature's contradictions. Formed

of the softest materials—of the gentle smile and the soothing word, yet nothing can exceed its utter hard-heartedness. Its element is vanity, of the coldest, harshest, and most selfish order: it sacrifices all sense of right, all kindly feelings, all pity, for the sake of a transient triumph. Lady Mary knew — for when has woman not known? — her power. She knew that she was wholly beloved by a heart, proud, sensitive, and desponding. She herself had warmed fear into hope — had made passion seem possible to one who felt, keenly felt, how much nature had set him apart. If genius for one moment believed that it could create love, as it could create all else, hers was the fault; she nursed the delusion: it was a worthy tribute to her self-love.

"Truly, her ladyship," said the Duke of Wharton, "parades Parnassus a little too much. Does she suppose nobody is to be flattered but herself? Come, Hervey, let us try a little wholesome neglect." Forthwith they devoted themselves exclusively to Lady Marchmont. Lady Mary's smiles were un-

marked, and her witticisms fell dead-weights so far as they were concerned. This was too much for a wit and a beauty to endure. Of what avail was flattery that she only heard herself? She grew impatient till the collation was over, and was the first to step out upon the lawn.

Pope did the honours of his garden, which was a poem in itself. He shewed them his favourite willow — fittest tree for such a soil — so pale and tender in its green, so delicate a lining within the leaves, so fragile and so drooping, with so mournful a murmur when the wind stirs its slender branches. The whole scene was marked by that air of refined and tranquil beauty which is the charm of an English landscape. The fields had that glossy green, both refreshing and cheerful; the slight ascents were clothed with trees — some retaining their verdure, others wearing those warm and passionate colours that, like all things coloured by passion, so soon exhaust themselves. Yet what a gorgeous splendour is on an autumnal landscape! The horse-chestnut, with its rich

mixture of orange and brown — the sycamore, with its warrior scarlet — the coral red of the small leaves of the hawthorn, mixed together with an oriental pomp; as if the year died, like the Assyrian monarch, on a pyre of all precious things. Winding its way in broken silver, the sunshine dancing on every ripple, the Thames lay at the edge of the grassy sweep. The blue sky, with the light clouds floating on its surface, was mirrored in the depths of the river; but, as if it lost somewhat of its high tranquillity under the influence of our sphere, the reflection was agitated and tremulous, while the reality was calm and still. It is but the type of our restless world, and the serene one to which we aspire: we look up, and the heavens are above, holy and tranquil; we look down on their mirror below, and they are varying and troubled. But few flowers, and those pale and faint, lingered in the garden: these Pope gathered and offered to his fair guests. Lady Marchmont placed hers carefully in her girdle. "I shall keep even the withered leaves as a relic," said she,

with a smile even more flattering than her words. It was well that she engrossed the attention of her host from the dialogue going on between Lord Hervey and Lady Mary.

"You learned the language of flowers in the East," said he; "but I thought dwarfs were only the messengers."

"And such they are now," replied his listener: "here is one flower for you,

> 'The rest the gods dispersed on empty air,'"

and she flung the blossoms carelessly from her.

Pope did not see the action, for he was pointing out a beautiful break in the view. "I have," said he, "long had a favourite project—that of planting an old Gothic cathedral in trees. Tall poplars, with their white stems, the lower branches cut away, would serve for the pillars; while different heights would form the aisles. The thick green boughs would shed 'a dim religious light,' and some stately old tree would have a fine effect as the tower."

"A charming idea!" cried Wharton; "and we all know

'That sweet saint whose name the shrine would bear.'

But, while we are waiting for the temple, can you not shew us the altar?—we want to see your grotto."

Pope desired nothing better than to shew his new toy, and led the way to the pretty and fanciful cave, which was but just finished. It was duly admired; but, while looking around, Wharton observed some verses lying on the seat.

"A treasure for the public good," exclaimed he; "I volunteer reading them aloud."

"Nay, nay, that is very unfair," cried Pope, who, nevertheless, did not secretly dislike the proposal.

"Oh," replied the duke, "we will allow for your modesty's 'sweet, reluctant, amorous delay;' but read them I must and shall." Then, turning towards Lady Mary, he read the following lines:—

> " Ah, friend, 'tis true — this truth you lovers know,
> In vain my structures rise, my gardens grow;
> In vain fair Thames reflects the double scene
> Of hanging woodlands, and of sloping green:
> Joy lives not here; to happier seats it flies,
> And only lives where Wortley casts her eyes."

" Pray, 'fair inspirer of the tender strains,' let me lay the offering at your feet."

" Under them, if you please," said she, her fine features expressing the most utter contempt; and, trampling the luckless compliment in the dust, she took Lord Hervey's hand, and, exclaiming,—" The atmosphere of this place is too oppressive for me," left the grotto: but part of her whisper to her companion was meant to be audible,—

> " A sign-post likeness of the human race,
> That is at once resemblance and disgrace."

CHAPTER XIX.

Alas, how bitter are the wrongs of love
Life has no other sorrow so acute:
For love is made of every fine emotion,
Of generous impulses, and noble thoughts;
It looketh to the stars, and dreams of Heaven;
It nestles 'mid the flowers, and sweetens earth.
Love is aspiring, yet is humble, too:
It doth exalt another o'er itself,
With sweet heart-homage, which delights to raise
That which it worships; yet is fain to win
The idol to its lone and lowly home
Of deep affection. 'Tis an utter wreck
When such hopes perish. From that moment, life
Has in its depths a well of bitterness,
For which there is no healing.

Lady Marchmont was left alone in the grotto with its ill-fated master, and every kindly feeling in her nature was in arms. Affecting not to have noticed what passed, she approached where Pope stood,—speechless, pale with anger, and

a yet deeper emotion: she said, in a voice whose usual sweetness was sweeter than ever, with its soothing and conciliating tone,—"There is one part of your garden, Mr. Pope, which I must entreat you to shew me. I have a dear, kind old uncle at home, who owes you many a delightful evening. He will never forgive me unless I write him word that I have seen

> 'The grapes long lingering on the sunny wall.'"

Pope took her hand mechanically, and led her forth; but the effort at self-control was too much for his weak frame. The drops stood on that pale high brow which was the poetry of his face, and he leant against the railing. "No!" exclaimed he, passionately, after a few minutes' silence, "your courtesy, lady, cannot disguise from me that you, too, heard the insult of that heartless woman. Let me speak—I know I may trust your kindness; and, even if you turned into after ridicule the bitter outpouring of this moment's misery, you would but do as others, in whom I trusted, have done. My

God! how madly I have loved her — madly indeed, since it made me forget the gulf that nature has set between us — she so beautiful, and I, as she has just said, who only resemble my kind to disgrace it! Yet she sought me first, she led me on, she taught me to think that the utter prostration of the heart was something in her eyes — that a mind like hers could appreciate mind. Fool, fool, that I have been! What have I done, that I should be thus set apart from my kind,—disfigured, disgraced, immeasurably wretched? Oh! that I might lay my weary head on my mother earth, and die!"

"We could not spare you," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, taking his hand affectionately,— the tears starting in her eyes; "but not for this moment's mortification must you forget your other friends — how much even strangers love and admire you. Think of your own glorious genius, and on the happiness which it bestows. I have but one relative in the world: he is an old solitary man; and I think of him with cheerfulness, whenever I send him a new page of yours. I speak but as one of many who

never name you but with admiration and with gratitude."

Pope pressed the hand that yet remained in his own. "God bless you, my dear, kind child! I thank you for calling my power to my mind. She shall learn that the worm on which she trod has a sting."

They loitered a little while, till the irritated host was equal to joining his guests. The boat was ready; and the whole party joined in laughing at Lady Marchmont for her long *tête-à-tête* with Pope.

"I am not jealous," cried Lady Mary:

> "'Ye meaner beauties, I permit ye shine—
> Go triumph in a heart that once was mine!'"

"I think," said Lady Marchmont, pointedly, "there has been as little heart in the matter as possible; but you shall none of you laugh me out of my cordial admiration of a man of first-rate genius, and whose personal infirmities call upon us for the kindliest sympathy."

"By Jove! you are right," cried the Duke of Wharton: "how much vanity may be par-

doned in one who has such cause for just pride! He is building up a noble monument in his language, which will last when we, with our small hopes and influences, are as much forgotten as if we had never been."

"I see no great good in being remembered," retorted Lady Mary: "I would fain concentrate existence in the present. I would forget in order to enjoy. As to memory, it only reminds me that I am growing older every day; and as to hope, it only puts one out of conceit with possession."

"All this is very true of our commonplace existences," replied Lady Marchmont; "but the gifted mind has a diviner element."

> "'How charming is divine philosophy —
> Not harsh and rugged, as dull fools believe,'"

exclaimed Lord Hervey, with a sneer.

"With the single exception of Lady Marchmont," said Wharton, "we have all behaved shamefully to-day. How I will admire the next thing that Pope writes! and, what is more, I will ride over to Twickenham to tell him so;"

and, having made this compromise with his conscience, the conversation dropped.

From that day, however, all friendship was at an end between Lady Mary and Pope. How he revenged himself is well known. His lines yet remain, stamped with all the bitterness of wounded vanity and mortified affection. Strange, the process by which love turns into hate. I pity it even more than I blame it. What unutterable wretchedness must the heart have undergone! what scorn and what sorrow must have been endured before revenge could become a refuge and a resource!

CHAPTER XX.

THE MARRIAGE MORNING.

My heart is filled with bitter thought,
   My eyes would fain shed tears;
I have been thinking upon past,
   And upon future years.

Years past — why should I stir the depths
   Beneath their troubled stream?
And years that are as yet to come,
   Of them I dread to dream.

Yet wherefore pause upon our way?
   'Tis best to hurry on;
For half the dangers that we fear,
   We face them, and they're gone.

The morning came when Norbourne Courtenaye was to marry his cousin. He and his mother had arrived at Norbourne Park the evening before, as it had been settled that the ceremony was to be performed in the little chapel Lord Norbourne had himself built. At

one time he had spent large sums of money on the house, but that was when he had hoped for a son; of late years he obviously directed his views in another channel. He had pulled down a great part of the building, while he increased his landed property to a vast extent; but all his purchases were adjacent to the Courtenaye property, which, when united with his own, would make one of the finest estates in England. He had long gone back upon the ancient honours of his house, instead of his once hope to be the founder of another line.

In the little, as in the great things of life, are to be found the type and the sign of our immortality. Every hope that looks forward is pledge of the hereafter to which it refers. Who rests content with the present? None. We have all deep within us a craving for the future. In childhood we anticipate youth; in youth manhood; in manhood old age; and to what does that turn, but to a world beyond our own? From the very first, the strong belief is nursed within us; we look

forward and forward, till that which was desire grows faith. The to come is the universal heritage of mankind; and he claims but a small part of his portion who looks not beyond the grave.

The house was alive with bridal preparations—still there was but little mirth. Lord Norbourne had, as well as Mrs. Courtenaye, impressed his character on his household. His lordship's was quiet, obedient, and perfect in all mechanical arrangement; the lady's was staid, slow, and solemn. Merriment appeared a sort of excess to either, at least while in the atmosphere of either master or mistress. The day itself was miserably dull; a thick fog shut out the landscape, while a few of the nearer trees alone were visible, spreading out their thin spectral arms on the murky air. Over head, the sky was of that dull leaden hue to whose monotony even a dark cloud would be a relief. It was as if the most smoke-like of earth's vapours had obscured the fair face of heaven.

It was curious to look within each chamber,

and mark the different employ of the principal individuals. Lord Norbourne was seated by a blazing fire, while the whole dressing-room was fragrant with the coffee which had just been brought to him. Mechanically, he was turning over paper, and opening letters; but his thoughts were not with his employ. He looked more anxious than he often allowed himself to look; but then, to be sure, there was no one near to observe it. Suddenly, his glance fell on a casket near; he opened it, and the fire's light shone reflected from its glittering contents.

"Ay," said he, aloud, "these toys make the destiny of woman; and I doubt whether, after all, our own be not equally worthless. Is there any thing worth the exertion of procuring it? Thank God, we grow accustomed to our daily yoke; and it is habit, and habit only, that enables us to get through life. Would that I could put my head, for a few hours, on Norbourne's shoulders. 'If young people would but consider,' says a moral essay that I have somewhere read: it would be

putting the thing much more rationally, to say, if young people would but let us consider for them, and be satisfied. Youth would be a delightful time, if it were not so singularly absurd; and if the consequences of its vain hopes, and foolish beliefs, did not remain long after themselves have passed away. I, for one, have no wish to live my youth over again;" and the speaker sank back in a gloomy reverie.

Lord Norbourne was a very handsome man, and young-looking for his time of life. It was as if the moral energy which was the great characteristic of his mind exercised its strong control even over time, and forbade it to leave traces of internal struggle on that smooth and polished brow. But to-day the shadow of long-past years rested upon it; and in the dejected attitude, the melancholy expression, few would have recognised the bland and stately bearing which generally defied scrutiny in Lord Norbourne. Suddenly, he started from his seat.

"Folly!" exclaimed he, "to waste my

time in these miserable recollections! I have decided that Norbourne shall marry Constance. It is life to her, and every thing that makes life worth having to him. Wealth, rank, and power — these may surely weigh in the scale against a boy's fancy:" but the speaker's countenance again darkened, and he was silent. "This is worse than foolish," said he, in a low and determined tone: "of all follies that we can commit, the greatest is to hesitate."

So saying, he took up the case of jewels; and, with his usual smile, and quiet step, sought his daughter's chamber.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TOILETS.

Bring from the east, bring from the west,
Flowers for the hair, gems for the vest;
Bring the rich silks that are shining with gold,
Wrought in rich broidery on every fold.

Bring ye the perfumes that breathe on the rose,
Such as the summer of Egypt bestows;
Bring the white pearls from the depths of the sea —
They are fair like the neck where their lustre will be.

Such are the offerings that now will be brought,
But can they bring peace to the turmoil of thought?
Can they one moment of quiet bestow
To the human heart, feverish and beating, below?

The next chamber was that of Mrs. Courtenaye. For the first time since her husband's death, she had thrown off her weeds, and put on attire more suited to the occasion. She was richly, yet plainly dressed, in a purple velvet, with a hood of white point lace. Even

her silent handmaids were surprised out of their ordinary propriety by her appearance. She waved away, with an impatient gesture of her hand, the mirror that they brought; and, saying she wished to be alone, flung herself on a seat.

"I know not," exclaimed she, "why I should feel this depression and regret. Does not this marriage ensure Norbourne all that life can desire — wealth, rank, and security? I wedded, as I thought, for love, faith, and happiness; and what was the end? Years of bitter fear and doubt. Dishonour has stood for ever, a spectre, viewless, but dreaded, at my side. That ghost is now laid for ever; why, then, am I sad?"

Her own heart told her why. Years had passed since, with a burning cheek and a beating heart she had knelt by the side of Norbourne's father, and arisen from before the priest and the crucifix, his bride. She thought what a world of sweet emotion sent the light to her eyes, and the colour to her blush, as they wandered together beneath the

silvery shadows of the olive grove. How minutely was the slightest thing impressed on her memory! She remembered the childish sorrow with which she saw the thicker boughs shut out the sunshine, because she no longer could watch his shadow. She thought, too, how they leant beside the old Moorish well, whose deep water was like a dark and polished mirror—leant gazing each on the image of the other, and then laughed aloud in tender mockery, to think that they should gaze on a shadow with the reality so near; and they looked into each other's eyes with a deeper fondness. With what sweet confidence did they talk of the future; what a loveliness, never noted before, was on the blue sky and the fair earth!

It was the loveliness of love, flinging his own divine likeness over all; and this love, the only spiritual and mighty happiness of which humanity is capable, was henceforth to be to Norbourne a forbidden word. He loved one, and was to wed another. Earth has no such misery. It is wretchedness to pine

through long years of uncertain absence, subject to all the casualties of doubt and distance, feeding on long expectation; till, as the Scripture so touchingly says, hope deferred is sickness to the heart: still there is hope, and love has a store of subtle happiness in the many links that memory delights to bind, and whose tender recallings are the dearest guarantee for the future.

It is wretchedness to kneel by the grave of the departed, who have taken with them the verdure from the earth, and the glory from the sky; who have left home and heart alike desolate: but then the soul asserts its diviner portion, looks afar off through the valley of the shadow of tears, and is intensely conscious that here is but its trial, and beyond is its triumph. The love that dwells with the dead has a sanctity in its sorrow; for love, above all things, asserts that we are immortal. But wretchedness takes no form, varied as are its many modes in this our weary existence, like that where the hand is given, and the heart is far away—where the love vowed at the altar is not that which lies

crushed, yet not quenched, within the hidden soul. Hope brings no comfort; for there were cruelty and crime in its promises: memory has no solace; it can, at best, only crave oblivion —and oblivion of what? Of all life's sweet dreams, and deepest feelings. Yet, what slight things must, with a sting like that of the adder, bring back the past — too dear, and yet too bitter! a word, a look, a tone, may be enough to wring every pulse with the agony of a vain and forbidden regret.

Mrs. Courtenaye felt that her son needed consolation; and she hurried to his chamber, and had opened the door before she recollected that she could say—nothing. He was already dressed, and alone. He was leaning against the fire-place, and so lost in thought that he did not hear his mother enter.

"My own dear child!" said she, laying her hand on his. He started — his cheek grew deadly pale: it was for a moment, and his part was taken.

"Ah! you were afraid I should not have finished my toilet," exclaimed he, with a forced

smile; "but do let me admire the result of yours. Why, my dear mother, I did not know how beautiful you were!" and he gazed with a natural touch of pride on the noble face and stately figure, to which time, while it stole freshness, had given dignity.

The tears, in despite of her efforts, swam in her eyes. He would not seem to see them; but, taking her hand, kissed it fervently as he led her forth. Deep and bitter is the grief that shrinks from words, even with those the most loved and trusted; and what a world of unspoken sorrow was in the soul of both mother and son as they crossed the threshold!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JEWELS GIVEN.

A gentle creature was that girl,
  Meek, humble, and subdued;
Like some lone flower that has grown up
  In woodland solitude.

Its soil has had but little care,
  Its growth but little praise;
And down it droops the timid head
  It has not strength to raise.

For other brighter blooms are round,
  And they attract the eye;
They seem the sunny favourites
  Of summer, earth, and sky.

The human and the woodland flower
  Hath yet a dearer part,—
The perfume of the hidden depths,
  The sweetness at the heart.

"You must wear these to-day, my dear child," said Lord Norbourne, as, entering the dressing-

room of his daughter, he laid a suit of pearls on her table.

Constance looked up in her father's face, tearfully: there was something in his voice so kind, so subdued, so different from its ordinary careless and sarcastic tone; and the expression on his features was equally unusual. Touched and encouraged for the first time in her life, she flung herself, unbidden, into her father's arms, and he held her tenderly to his heart.

"Are you happy, my child?" asked he, in a low broken whisper.

"Happy! my dearest father," exclaimed she, hiding her face on his arm, where she still hung, till he could only see the back of her neck, and even that was rosy with one deep blush — "unutterably happy! Even to myself I never dared own, till now, how much I loved my cousin. When others taunted me with faults which, God knows, I felt but too bitterly, Norbourne always took my part. From him I never heard an unkind word. I have often cried myself to sleep in his arms. As I grew older, I loved him but the more,

because such love seemed hopeless. I never dreamt that one so beautiful, so gifted, could waste a thought on myself. But it was happiness to hope that he might be happy, to think of him, to pray for him. And now to know that he loves me (for he would not marry me without), makes me feel as if I were in a dream, whose only fear is to awake. And you, my dearest father, how kind you are to me! Can you forgive me if I tell you that there was a time when I thought you did not care for me, because I was not fair as my sisters? It made me feel so lonely, so sad; and I clung yet more to my love for my cousin: no one cared for my affection; it was, therefore, my own to do with as I would. But his love scarcely fills me with a deeper joy than does yours. Oh, my father! if I have ever given you cause for pain, if I have ever angered you, forgive me now: tell me that, in future years, when weary of the hurried life that you now lead, my care, my affection, will be a comfort to you; tell me, my own dearest father, that you love me!"

While speaking, Constance had raised her

head, and gazed eagerly on her father: her cheek was warm, with colour more lovely from its extreme delicacy; her eyes lighted up with the eloquence of excited emotion; and every feature was animated with the impassioned and beautiful feelings of the moment. She looked lovely; and Lord Norbourne, for an instant, forgot the under current of self-reproach, which, though he would not have owned, yet made itself only too forcibly felt within.

"Do I love you?" said he, in answer to her touching appeal: "deeply and dearly, my last, my only child. I have, Heaven knows, nothing to pardon in one who has always been so patient, so sweet, and so good. No, my dearest and gentlest, it is you who must forgive, if, taken up with the cares of the world, in projects that looked only to the future, I have forgotten the womanly tenderness due to an orphan girl; yet you are, you have been, very dear to me, my own sweet Constance."

His voice faltered; for affections, undisturbed for years, swelled within him. Every kindly and warm emotion was awakened,

and, for the first time, he felt remorse: he almost trembled to think how completely his daughter was deceived, while he also felt that her happiness could not be dearly purchased. And yet, Norbourne—was he not his victim, and made such by all that was most generous in his nature? Had he stood alone, his uncle was perfectly aware that no wealth, no rank, no worldly advantage, would have moved him; but his mother had been the tie, and Lord Norbourne started to think how mercilessly he had enforced his power. A glance at Constance somewhat reassured him. Could his nephew be long wholly given up to vain regrets, with one so devoted, and so sweet, at his side? Such affection must bring with it hope and healing. For the first time, too, he thought with pity on her who was forsaken. He knew there was some prior attachment. What at this moment might not some young and lovely victim be suffering!

But it was not in his temper to dwell long on vain regrets: he soothed them by turning to the numerous advantages which

attended this alliance, and was soon able to say calmly to his daughter,—" Shall I lead you down-stairs?"

" A few minutes yet," exclaimed she. " Leave me a little while alone."

The door closed after Lord Norbourne; and Constance flung herself on her knees, and half said, half wept, a thanksgiving for her entire happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MARRIAGE.

Bind the white orange-flowers in her hair,
  Soft be their shadow, soft and somewhat pale—
For they are omens. Many anxious years
  Are on the wreath that bends the bridal veil.

The maiden leaves her childhood and her home,
  All that the past has known of happy hours —
Perhaps her happiest ones. Well may there be
  A faint wan colour on those orange-flowers:

For they are pale as hope, and hope is pale
  With earnest watching over future years;
With all the promise of their loveliness,
  The bride and morning bathe their wreath with tears.

Constance was yet kneeling when Mrs. Courtenaye entered, who was wholly softened by the attitude, and the tearful eyes that met her as she approached. She did not like Constance: there was a timidity and a gentleness about her, which, to her calm and determined

temper, seemed only weakness. Besides, however innocent, she was the cause of her own suffering; and she confounded the unoffending girl with her father. But it was impossible to be quite untouched with Constance's meek sweetness, and she took her hand with a degree of kindness which melted the poor child into tears of tender gratitude. But she was silent, for Constance feared her aunt too much for any burst of the confidence with which she indulged herself to her father. They went down-stairs together, and found the bridal party assembled.

The guests had been selected with Lord Norbourne's usual judgment. There were only some three or four, of the highest rank. A young nobleman, connected with the ministry, who had come from Sir Robert Walpole to summon Lord Norbourne, on business of the first importance, to London, was the sole cavalier, to the great discontent of the two bridesmaids. These were the Ladies Diana and Frances, who came with their mother, the Duchess of Pympton, a distant connexion of

the family. Tall, dark, with harsh features, from which five-and-thirty summers had stolen all youthful bloom, if they had ever had any— a fact admitting of more than doubt — they afforded no injudicious contrast to the bride. Constance, half hidden in her veil, blushing and agitated, looked, at least, lady-like and interesting; and there was as little room given as possible for a contrast between the appearance of the bride and bridegroom.

The chapel was a small Gothic edifice, which had been built by Lord Norbourne, and who had spared no pains on its decoration: yet its chief ornaments were tombs. There was the monument of his wife, and child after child had followed. Every niche was filled by a funeral urn, and by marble shapes that bent down in a pale eternity of sorrow. In one arch was a marble tablet, bearing a date, but no name; and beneath was a kneeling female: the beautiful hands were clasped as if in prayer and penitence; but the bowed-down face was hidden in the long hair, that fell unbound over the exquisitely sculptured figure.

There was a grave beneath, but who slept in that grave was known only to Lord Norbourne. There was in the stillness of the statues around, so colourless, so calm, that which struck cold upon the guests. All around spoke of desolation and of death, till life seemed but a mockery in their presence. What folly to crowd so brief a span with the toil and the fever in which men spend their days! It is a strange and solemn thing that the bridal ritual should take place in the presence of the dead. Dust that a breath could blow aside, yet that was once, like ourselves, animate with hope, passion, and sorrow, is below; around are the vain memorials of human grief and human pride; yet all alike dedicated to the gone.

Norbourne Courtenaye glanced around on the marble monuments—they seemed fitting company at his bridal: the service sounded like a burial rite; it was the funeral of his hopes. Mechanically he obeyed the directions to place the ring on the finger of his bride. Constance started at the death-cold hand that

touched her own; for the first time she ventured to raise her eyes to his, but they answered not to that timid and imploring look: his thoughts were far away. Alas, for Constance, had she known that they dwelt upon another! Even as it was, the pale cheek, and the sad abstracted eye, sent a chill to the heart of the young bride: she was pale and absent as the bridegroom. When the service was over, she started, as if from a dream, when all pressed round to congratulate her as the wife of Norbourne Courtenaye.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONFIDENCE.

Fear not to trust her destiny with me:
I can remember, in my early youth,
Wandering amid our old ancestral woods,
I found an unfledged dove upon the ground.
I took the callow creature to my care,
And fain had given it to its nest again:
That could not be, and so I made its home
In my affection, and my constant care.
I made its cage of osier-boughs, and hung
A wreath of early leaves and woodland flowers:
I hung it in the sun; and, when the wind
Blew from the cold and bitter east, 'twas screened
With care that never knew forgetfulness.
I loved it, for I pitied it, and knew
Its sole dependence was upon my love.

"I UNDERSTOOD, my lord, that you wished to see me," said Norbourne Courtenaye, with the calm, cold manner, that had marked his bearing to his uncle since his marriage had been decided upon: "I fear that I have kept

you waiting, for I went first to your own room ——"

"It was here," interrupted Lord Norbourne, "that I wished to see you."

He paused, and his nephew stood by with his arms folded, in silence, as if resolved not to begin the conversation. There was much resemblance between the two: both had the same cast of features. It is curious to remark how a family sets its mark on its descendants: assuredly there is a subtle sympathy in the ties of blood, still one of the mysteries of our nature. But if their old line gave the resemblance, time had marked the difference. The meaning on Norbourne's fine features came direct from the feeling; his eyes were thoughtful, but they had that deep and inward look which belongs only to the dreaming meditations of youth. He wore a saddened and subdued air; it was obvious that he had not yet learned sorrow's bitterest task — that of concealment.

Lord Norbourne's countenance needed closer analysis to detect its hidden meaning.

His dark brow was knit, and his darker eye rarely wore any other expression than that of penetration. He looked upon you, and read you through. His features, fine, high, and somewhat stern in repose, were yet capable of being moulded to any meaning it was his will that they should express. Now, though his mouth worked with agitation, it had not lost its bland and habitual smile; but there was that in his face few ever saw in the self-possessed, the cold and reserved Lord Norbourne. He paced the gallery with quick and irregular steps, while his eye more than once met that of his nephew, who, however, preserved a resolute silence.

"This is most unworthy hesitation," exclaimed he, at last; and, approaching the fire-place, leant opposite Norbourne. "I see," continued he, "that you resent my conduct. I do not wonder at it. I reproach myself for it; but, at least, hear me before you utterly condemn me. I find I cannot do without some portion of your good-will; for, little as you

may believe it, you have ever been dear to me as a child of my own."

The earnestness of his uncle's manner touched Norbourne in spite of himself; and, almost unconsciously, he made a step nearer to him, as he continued :—

"I am ambitious: I own it; for what are a man's talents given, but for a high and influential career? I was ambitious for myself; I am now ambitious for my line. I do take pride in thinking of our house restored to all its original honours. Have you none in knowing the position you will occupy?"

"Do you think," said Norbourne, sternly, "wealth and rank would have tempted me to act as I have done? Lord Norbourne, I tell you to your face, but that you had in your power the name and fame of a beloved mother—ay, and her life too, I would never have married your daughter. I loved—I do love another; but why should I speak of warm and natural emotions to one who knows not of them?"

"Poor Constance!" exclaimed her father.

"Nay," interrupted Norbourne, "do not fear for her. She, at least, shall never know that at the altar where I pledged my faith, did I also sacrifice my sweetest and my best hopes. She shall not be the victim of your ambition. Carefully will I guard her from any sorrow that rests with me: pity girdles her round with a tenderness, deep almost as love. And now, my lord, I conclude that our conference is at an end: why should we inflict unnecessary pain on each other?"

"Not yet," exclaimed his uncle, yielding wholly to the impulse of strong emotion. "Norbourne, I am neither so callous nor so worldly as you deem me. Look on these portraits!" and he pointed to four pictures that hung on the wall opposite. Never was the painter's skill taxed to give more lovely likenesses of humanity. There were four blooming girls, all drawn at full length; and, though different, it was hard to say which was the most beautiful. "Are not those children of

whom any father might be proud?" asked Lord Norbourne. "For years I hoped to have a son; and, when that was denied me, I thought ever of one of those girls as your wife. Years passed by, and each year saw one of those bright heads laid low in the grave. My poor sickly Constance alone escaped the hereditary malady which destroyed her lovely and healthful sisters. A year ago that neglected child, so young, so feeble, and so uncared for, was my nurse through the fever which even the hireling would hardly brave. I loved her with that deep remorseful love which feels that it is a late atonement. I saw (for she is too ignorant and too guileless for disguise) that her heart was wholly yours. I saw her, too, delicate, sensitive; ready to fade away before life's first sorrow. I could not bear to think that disappointed affection should hurry her to an early grave. Norbourne, in the name of the deepest and the holiest feeling that I have, I implore you to forgive me."

Norbourne took the proffered hand; his

anger had vanished in sympathy, and they stood for a few moments in agitated silence, which was broken by Lord Norbourne.

"I know that you are now in love: but what is love?—a young man's feverish dream, whose realities, on awakening, he would give worlds to recall. I loved once — foolishly, madly; for I sacrificed every thing to my boyish passion. I married one without fortune or connexion; for her sake I gave up all those higher schemes on which my hopes had fed from very childhood. For her sake I was content to endure poverty, and—far worse—obscurity. Do you wish to see the face which made me—a fool?"

He stepped forward, and touched the spring of a picture-case, which Norbourne had not before seen opened. He almost started at the dazzling loveliness of the countenance on which he gazed. The large black eyes flashed, as if they realised the old poet's description:—

> "Such eyes on Jove had thrown
> A lightning, fierce and sudden as his own."

The colour on the cheek was rich and elo-

quent, and the small mouth curved with a consciousness of its own loveliness. It was one of those faces that at once appeal to the imagination: you feel that there must be a history belonging to it. You have a foreboding of passion, and its fulfilment, despair.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RESULT.

And this, then, is love's ending. It is like
The history of some fair southern clime:
Hot fires are in the bosom of the earth,
And the warmed soil puts forth its thousand flowers,
Its fruits of gold — summer's regality;
And sleep and odours float upon the air,
Making it heavy with its own delight.
At length the subterranean element
Bursts from its secret solitude, and lays
All waste before it. The red lava stream
Sweeps like a pestilence; and that which was
A garden for some fairy tale's young queen
Is one wild desert, lost in burning sand.
Thus is it with the heart. Love lights it up
With one rich flush of beauty. Mark the end:
Hopes, that have quarrelled even with themselves,
And joys that make a bitter memory;
While the heart, scorched and withered, and o'erwhelmed
By passion's earthquake, loathes the name of love.

Both stood for a few moments gazing on the picture; when Lord Norbourne exclaimed, as

he saw his nephew's look of admiration,—"Yes, the bait was fair enough; and how was I repaid for my utter devotion — for the sacrifice of my future? By desertion. She left me for another — how immeasurably my inferior! I had my revenge, for I followed them abroad. She had already been false to him as to me. He was alone, but not the less did I avenge my dishonour: we met, and he fell. Years afterwards, and I met her also; changed, but lovely, amid sickness and want. I saved her from destitution, and saw her once more; for I stood by her death-bed, and forgave her. There is a grave, without a name, in yonder chapel: she so fair, and so frail, sleeps below."

Norbourne again grasped his uncle's hand. He could not speak: it was as if, for the first time in his life, he had looked beyond the seeming surface of humanity. Was it possible that the calm, the polished, the worldly Lord Norbourne could have been shaken by such fierce passion — touched by such soft feelings as he had really known? And yet so it ever is.

How little do we know of even our most familiar associates! Hopes, feelings, and passion, petrify one after another; the crust of experience soon hardens over the hidden past; and who, looking on the levelled and subdued exterior, could dream of the wreck and ravage that lies below?

"I bought my experience dearly," continued Lord Norbourne; "but I did buy it. Henceforth woman assumed with me her natural destiny: a toy, if fair, for a vacant hour; a tool, if rich, for advancement in the world. I next married for fortune and family, and I found I had acted wisely. Lady Norbourne and myself got on perfectly together. My house was one of the best appointed in London, and her relations deemed it due to one connected with their family to take every opportunity of serving me. We never descended to the vulgarism of a quarrel. People said that neither of us had a heart, but it appears to me that politeness is an excellent substitute. I really felt very uncomfortable when she died. But I hear my travelling

carriage; and business has long been to me duty, inclination, mistress, friend. But tell me that we part kindly?"

"My dear uncle!" replied Norbourne, who accompanied the traveller to his carriage with very different feelings from what, an hour before, he had deemed it possible that he could have entertained.

A feather on the wind, a straw on the stream — such are, indeed, the emblems of humanity. We resolve, and our resolutions melt away with a word and a look: we are the toys of an emotion. And yet I think Norbourne was right in his sudden revulsion in favour of his uncle. We are rarely wrong when we act from impulse. By that I do not mean every rash, and wayward, and selfish fantasy; but by allowing its natural course to the first warm and generous feeling that springs up in the heart. Second thoughts are more worldly, more cold, and calculate on some advantage. This is what the ancients meant when they said that the impulse came from the gods, but the motive from men. Our eager belief, our

ready pity, our kindly sensations — these are the materials of good within us. As one of our poets says, with equal truth and beauty, " The heart is wise." We should be not only happier, but better, if we attended more to its dictates. Half the misery in the world arises from want of sympathy. We do not assist each other as we might do, because we rarely pause to ask, do they need our assistance? And this works out the moral of suffering: we need to suffer, that we may learn to pity.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

There is in life no blessing like affection:
It soothes, it hallows, elevates, subdues,
And bringeth down to earth its native heaven.
It sits besides the cradle patient hours,
Whose sole contentment is to watch and love;
It bendeth o'er the death-bed, and conceals
Its own despair with words of faith and hope.
Life has nought else that may supply its place:
Void is ambition, cold is vanity,
And wealth an empty glitter, without love.

My dearest Uncle,—I have this morning been returning the visit of the young Duchess of Marlborough. I should lose the reputation that I am gradually acquiring among our impenetrables here, were I to confess the excitement which I felt at the idea of entering his house—the house of that great general under whose command you made your first charge. It was to be quite a visit *d'amitié*, so she was

almost alone, in her closet richly furnished with crimson silk hangings, and the portraits of her father and mother. I was struck, not so much with the extraordinary beauty of the latter, though extraordinary it is, as with its extreme sweetness. I never saw such a loveable face. The imperious duchess had the eyes of a dove, and the mouth of a child; and the hair had that soft glossy silkness which I fancy usually belongs to a gentle and sensitive temperament. I could not help alluding to its loveliness.

"Yes," said the young duchess, "my mother's hair was quite remarkable, both for its length and profusion. But will you believe that she cut it all off one day, in order to plague my father, whose especial admiration it was. He had left her displeased about some trifle, and she severed the favourite tresses, and laid them in a conspicuous place on a table in his room. The long curls disappeared, no one knew how, and my father never made the slightest allusion to their loss; but, after his death, they were found in his cabinet, where he kept all that he had most precious. Even

my mother's haughty temper was fairly subdued by this; she never could allude to the circumstance without tears."

"After all," said Mr. Congreve, who was present, "*madame la duchesse* well understood the principles by which your sex obtain dominion. I always thought that there was great truth in what the French lover said, on being asked by what means his mistress had obtained such an empire over him: '*C'est qu'elle me querelle toujours.*'"

"I rather think," said a youthful Italian, just presented to me as la Signora Rosalba, and who was employed in finishing a miniature of the duchess, "that nothing gives offence between people who really love each other. The tempers may be irritated, but there is still a secret sympathy in the hearts."

"Moreover," replied Congreve, "it was a sort of flattery to the duke. It shewed that she valued the power of plaguing him more than her own fairest ornament. Flattery is the real secret by which a woman keeps her lover."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Italian, raising the softest dark eyes that I ever saw, "you speak of the love in crowds and cities, made up of falsehood and vanity, not of that high and holy passion, sent to elevate and to redeem our nature — the religion of the heart."

There was something about the youthful artist that interested me exceedingly. I must ask her to take my likeness for you. Painted by one so enthusiastic, it will come less surrounded by the vanities and follies of my present life. I never feel the value of affection so much as when I think of yours; nor its want, but when I look at my own home.

Well, I sometimes think that I should be glad to quarrel with Lord Marchmont, even like the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough: it would shew that we cared for each other. But I must write about something else than these vague fantasies: and now for their very antipodes, Mr. Congreve. He is not bad-looking, and dresses to desperation; with a peculiarly soft and flattering manner. He seems to be witty against his will; and if, by some sally

that will have its way, he makes you laugh, he is at once ashamed, and starts back into his usual languid and affected strain of compliment. Nature has made him an author and a wit; he blushes for both, and trusts that they are forgotten in the very fine gentleman. I was struck with the difference between his small affectation of denying and despising his own talents and their laudable use, and the earnest belief in their nobility which exists in the Italian artist. The one belongs to a higher order of intelligence than the other.

Well, enthusiasm is the divine particle in our composition: with it we are great, generous, and true; without it, we are little, false, and mean. Do let me tell you one thing the signora said: "I always pray in German — the language is so expressive and energetic." I wished at the moment that I knew it, that I might pray for you, my dear uncle — my more than parent.

We are going to-night to a ball at the Duchess of Queensberry's. I wonder she is not afraid at the world of disappointment her invitations have created. She has asked every

body but those who expected it. People are really not half thankful enough to her, she gives them so much to talk about. What, after all, is the great staple of conversation?—why, the faults and follies of others; and, generally speaking, they are insipid enough. How grateful, therefore, we ought to be to her Grace, whose follies are all of the most original order! Why, there is invention enough in them for a history,—

> "As histories are in these degenerate days."

And now for the toilet of your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

Mind, dangerous and glorious gift!
Too much thy native heaven has left
Its nature in thee, for thy light
  To be content with earthly home.
It hath another, and its sight
  Will too much to that other roam;
And heavenly light, and earthly clay,
But ill bear with alternate sway:
Till jarring elements create
  The evil which they sought to shun,
And deeper feel their mortal state
  In struggling for a higher one.
There is no rest for the proud mind,
Conscious of its high powers confined;
  Vain dreams and feverish hopes arise,
  It is itself its sacrifice.

Is it not Le Sage, my dearest uncle, who says, "to judge by their own account, the people of England are the most unhappy people under

the sun — with religion, liberty, and property; also, three meals a-day?" He was not far wrong, for nothing strikes me more forcibly than the universal tendency to grumble: conversation and complaint are synonymous terms. Our weather and our government are equally bad — at least every one says that they are.

I was at the dinner yesterday which, you know, has long been the subject of my anticipation — the one at Lady Oxford's, where I was to meet Pope, Swift, Gay; in short, all the wit in the world. We had a delightful day: the dinner — and though it is difficult to appreciate an enjoyment into which you cannot, for the very life of you, enter — still I begin to think that a good dinner is, at least, the stepping-stone to masculine felicity. The cook is one of the three Fates. Lady Oxford is a very good hostess. Without being clever enough to put people on their guard, she understands talent, which none can do without some of their own; and has a peculiar tact for putting a person's *amour propre* at rest by putting it in the best light. She knows how

to ask questions judiciously: and it is a first requisite to make people feel it is easy to answer you; and, also, that their answer reflects credit on themselves.

You see that I am studying my part as future *dame de château.* I hope, in time, to make my house the most brilliant in London; but I do not agree with Lord Marchmont in thinking that wealth is the only thing requisite. Wealth is to luxury what marble is to the palace — it must be there as the first material; but taste, and taste only, can direct its after-use. The light arch, and the graceful column, owe their exquisite proportion to the skill with which they are modelled.

But I am wandering away from the assertion that I was about to make; namely, that, with all the appliances of cheerfulness, with all the means of wit, the chief portion of the "table-talk" turned upon individual and general grievances. Each person was the most injured individual under the sun. Swift was, however, the one that most excited my sympathy. There is a stern melancholy in his

dark features, inherent and engrossing, which rivets the attention. The brow is black and overhanging, and the eyes gloomy while in a state of repose; but, when they kindle, it is like living fire, with a sort of strange animal fierceness in them. His laugh is suppressed and bitter; and I shall not easily forget the sarcasm of his smile as he told us of the Prince of Orange's harangue to the mob at Portsmouth: "We are come," said he, "for your good — for all your goods." "A universal principle," added Swift, "of all governments; but, like most other truths, only told by mistake." His manner is abrupt, and yet I could fancy it very kind sometimes; and he is more eloquent than I ever before heard in general society. Nothing could be more gloomy than the picture he drew of his residence in Ireland. It is that worst of solitudes, an intellectual one: above all things, the mind requires interchange. The heart may, perhaps, shut itself up in itself, as the motto on a pretty French seal that I have says,—

> "Avec les souvenirs et les esperances
> L'on se passe de bonheur;"

but the mind frets that only feeds upon its own resources. Swift's existence is one of the intellect: he does not look to the pleasures, to the affections, to the small employments of life; every sentence, however careless, betrays his contempt for them. He needs an active and stirring career — he needs to be taken out of himself—communication and contradiction are to him necessary elements; and, in the dull seclusion of his Irish deanery, he is wholly shut out from them. "It closes round me like a pall:" I cannot tell you the impression these words made upon me; they conjured up so many hours of dulness and of discontent. It must be so mortifying to a man, the consciousness of talent, and the knowledge that he is shut out from the sphere to which its exercise belongs. But here, again, is the old variance between nature and fortune: each seems to delight in marring the work of the other.

There was one contrast in Swift with his fellow wits: they grew gayer as the dinner progressed, he did not. At first, his conversation was very lively — a sort of fierce vivacity, like a bird or beast of prey dashing at its

game. He gave a very amusing account of his journey from Ireland; how he was not only stopped at the "Three Crosses," by a shrew of a landlady, but scolded into the bargain. His revenge was most characteristic. "Most people," said he to the landlord, "are content or discontent with paying their bill. I do more: I leave you, as a legacy, an invaluable piece of advice," pointing to some lines that he had written, with a diamond ring, on the window pane,—

> "There are three crosses to your door,
> Hang up your wife, and there 'll be four."

As the evening closed in, I was struck with the gloom which seemed to fall upon him. His face lost its intellectual animation—it was almost stupid; and I never before saw blank despondency so expressed in human eye. Even now I try to shake off the painful impression. But I must leave the remainder of the dinner till to-morrow, trusting that you will not say,

> "Un diner rechauffé ne valut jamais rien."

We are going to play loo at Mrs. Howard's;

but, alas! though he is the fashion, I am quite inaccessible to the fascinations of Pam. Good by till to-morrow.

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

Life's best gifts are bought dearly. Wealth is won
By years of toil, and often comes too late:
With pleasure comes satiety; and pomp
Is compassed round with vexing vanities:
And genius, earth's most glorious gift, that lasts
When all beside is perished in the dust—
How bitter is the suffering it endures!
How dark the penalty that it exacts!

My dearest Uncle,—I return at once to the dinner at Lady Oxford's. Mr. Pope was within two of me at table. At first our meeting was a little awkward: he could not forget that I had witnessed his mortification. Pope is more pettish than the Dean of St. Patrick's. He could not, I am persuaded, even comprehend the other's deep misanthropy. He takes pleasure in what Swift would disdain. I cannot ima-

gine the dean laying out grass-plots, and devising grottoes; he has no elegant tastes,—sources, it must be acknowledged, of great gratification to the possessor. Pope, moreover, is greedy: such a dinner he devoured, and then talked of his moderation! I do not think that he would have given Swift's answer to Lord B——, who tried to persuade him to dine with him by saying,—"I will send you my bill of fare." "Send me," was the reply, "your bill of company." Still, I am charitable enough to make great allowance for the capricious appetite of an invalid, more than I do for his predilection for Mrs. Martha Blount, who was also of our party. She is undeniably handsome—what you gentlemen call a fine woman; but she has cold, unkind eyes, and thin lips, which she bites. Now, if a bad temper has an outward and visible sign, it is that. I hear that she has great influence over the poet, and can readily believe it. He is affectionate, and keenly sensitive to his personal defects; and would, therefore, be at once grateful for, and flattered by, any display of feminine kindness.

Moreover, in all domestic arrangements, it is the better nature that yields; a violent temper is despotic the moment that it crosses your threshold. I disliked her, too, for her depreciating way; she had an *if* and a *but* for every person named. Now, the individual who can find no good in any one else has certainly no good in himself:

> "How can we reason but from what we know?"

Pope talked very readily and playfully about his translation of Homer: for example, some discussion arising about what flower was meant by the asphodel of Homer, he said, laughing,—"Why, I believe it to be the poor yellow flower that grows wild in our fields: what would you say if I had rendered the line thus,—

> ——'The stern Achilles
> Stalked through a mead of daffodillies?'"

He also told me an anecdote quite as characteristic of the teller as that of Swift's. There was a Lord Russell, who had ruined his con-

stitution by riotous living. He was not fond of field-sports, but used to go out with his dogs to hunt, for an appetite. If he felt any delightful approaches of hunger, he would cry out, "Oh, I have found it!" and ride home again, though in the middle of the finest chase.

"You see," said Pope, "there is no fool without some portion of sense."

Gay gave me more the idea of a clever child; he was dressed with the greatest neatness, and did not dislike a little raillery about his toilet. He has a sweet, placid expression of countenance; and an excellent appetite, which quite belied the melancholy manner in which he told us of his disappointments at court. He quoted that deeply pathetic passage of Spencer's,—

> "Full little knowest thou, who hast not tried,
> What hell it is, in sueing long, to bide;
> To lose good days, that might be better spent;
> To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;

> To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares ;
> To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs ;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

Yet there was something so irresistibly ludicrous in his manner, that there was not one of us but laughed at his misfortunes.

Alas, for human nature! even grief must take an attitude before it can hope for sympathy. I now understand on what principle our widows wear weeds, and our judges wigs. The imposing external appearance is every thing in this world.

The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, however, have taken Gay under their especial patronage; and he lives with them. And now that the day is over, there is one great regret, which is, that, with all my wish to tell you every thing, I can remember so little. But the spirit of conversation cannot be caught and re-corked : moreover, of all our faculties, memory is the one the least under our control. I am sometimes amused, but oftener provoked, at the way in which a thing utterly escapes

recollection, and then comes back when least expected, and, usually, when least wanted. Still my general impression is that of great interest and amusement; and you know, my dear uncle, you spoil me, by saying, " Only tell me every thing—your telling is enough." All my details, at least, serve to shew you how anxious I am to make you acquainted with every thought of

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

COURTIERS.

Not in a close and bounded atmosphere
Does life put forth its noblest and its best;
'Tis from the mountain's top that we look forth,
And see how small the world is at our feet.
There the free winds sweep with unfettered wing;
There the sun rises first, and flings the last,
The purple glories of the summer eve;
There does the eagle build his mighty nest;
And there the snow stains not its purity.
When we descend, the vapour gathers round,
And the path narrows: small and worthless things
Obstruct our way; and, in ourselves, we feel
The strong compulsion of their influence.
We grow like those with whom we daily blend:
To yield is to resemble.

Ah, my dearest uncle! now I find the truth of what you used to tell me. I once thought

that you drew human nature in too dark colours; I now begin to think that is wholly impossible. Here we are flattering and hating, envying and caressing, duping and slandering, complimenting and ridiculing, each other. I really doubt whether there be such a thing as a heart in the world: perhaps, after all, it is only an elegant superfluity kept for the use of poets. Certainly we have no use for it here.

In consequence of the recent death of the king, we preserve a decorous appearance of dulness; but black is very becoming to a fair skin, and public mourning never yet interfered with private gaiety. I hear that his present majesty complains that he is no better off as king than he was as prince; the queen commanding him to retain Mrs. Howard as *dame de ses pensées.* She is right; it is only positive qualities that are dangerous, and Mrs. Howard is made up of negations: not, I dare say, that she ever said a good downright "no" in her life. But you must make her acquaintance personally. Fancy a tall and fine figure in a green taffety dress, set off with rose-coloured

ribands, both colours well suited to her fair hair and skin; a white muslin apron, trimmed with delicate lace; ruffles of the same material, shewing to much advantage a white and rounded arm: a chip hat, with flowers, is placed quite at the back of the light hair, which leaves the white and broad forehead exposed. By the by, talking of her fair hair, I must tell you an anecdote of the use to which it was once applied. When she and her husband were staying at Hanover, they asked some people to dinner, and Mrs. Howard was obliged to cut off her luxuriant tresses and sell them to pay for the said dinner! What a beginning! and, alas, what an excuse for any faults in her afterlife! Think of all the wretchedness included in the single word *poverty*. Truly Shakspeare says,—

——"Want will perjure
The ne'er stain'd vestal."

But to proceed with my description: her features are regular, and the eyes a soft blue; and she is singularly young-looking. Mrs. Howard is the very person to look young to

the last. What fades the cheek, and marks the brow with lines, but the keen feeling and the passionate sorrow? and of these she is incapable. The only expression of her face is repose; and, I must add, a sweet and gentle repose. An attachment to her would be just an agreeable and easy habit.

My dear uncle must let me borrow one of his own phrases. Mrs. Howard is just the type of a social system, whose morality is expediency, and whose religion is good breeding. In such a close and enervating atmosphere, it is scarcely possible for a generous sympathy, or a warm emotion, to exist. Courtiers and wits crowd round the royal idol, flinging one a compliment, and another an epigram, all ready to be snatched up again; the first to be used to any who may succeed, and the second to be turned against herself: all were alike actuated by selfishness on the smallest scale.

Still, I must say, the life of a maid of honour is no sinecure. Lady Harvey was giving me the description of a day. First,

there is the getting up early, which I, who should not know seven o'clock in the morning if I were to see it, think a most dreadful way of beginning the day. Then comes the imperative necessity of eating smoked Westphalian ham for breakfast: this is on the principle that imitation is the most delicate flattery. Then to horse — life and limb risked on hired hacks, and over hedge and ditch; the neck in comparative, the complexion in certain, danger. Home, then, they come in the middle of the day; blushing, not "celestial rosy red," but a good positive scarlet, with the heat; and also with a crimson mark on the forehead, from the pressure of the hat. Then they have to dress in a hurry, put on *pleine toilette* and smiles for the princess's circle, where they stand, simper, and catch cold, till dinner. So much for attendance at court.

In the meantime, Mrs. Howard has found leisure for divers other *adorateurs*. Lord Bathurst even excited the royal jealousy; for the prince intimated to the lady, that all supplies would be cut off, to use a national figure

of speech, if any flatteries were held too charming, save his own. This threat his royal highness thought was the most effective he could use. We always judge of others by ourselves; and his idea of Cupid's quiver is a rouleau. I heard a droll story of his courtship, in earlier days, of the beautiful Mrs. Campbell, when maid of honour. After sitting in silence for some time, he drew out his purse, and began to count his money. The lady pushed his elbow, and down rolled the glittering coin. They say that he has not yet forgiven her—not for the breach of etiquette, but for the risk that the poor dear guineas ran from the crevices on the floor. Lord Bathurst does not appear to me to be a very dangerous rival. I always long to quote two lines from Gay's "Fables:"

> "Shall grave and formal pass for wise,
> When men the solemn owl despise?"

Lord Peterborough, the romantic, the chivalric, was another of her *adorateurs*,—he who is enough to make one believe in the doctrine

of transmigration; for no soul but that of Lord Herbert of Cherbury could possibly inhabit his body.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who knows every thing about every body, has greatly diverted me with the Great Cyrus style of their correspondence. I remember hearing you read — ah, dear uncle, how pleasant were those winter evenings! — of some plant that exists floating on the air, never deigning to touch our meaner earth. The *grands sentimens* of these epistles have a similar kind of existence. One compliment is so very original, that I must quote it. He says,

"The chief attribute of the devil is, tormenting. Who could look upon you, and give you that title? Who can feel what I do, and give you any other? But, most certainly, I have more to lay to the charge of my fair one than can be objected to Satan or Beelzebub. We believe that they have only a mind to torment because they are tormented,—they, at least, are our companions in suffering; but my white devil partakes of none of my torments."

He concludes by exclaiming,—

"Forgive me if I threaten you: take this for a proof, as well as punishment. If you can prove inhuman, you shall have reproaches from Moscow, China, or the barbarous quarters of Tartary."

How he was to carry this "last bold threat" into execution, I know not. However, do not be too sorry for him: he has consoled his misery in the smiles of Mrs. Robinson. Perhaps he may urge with Mrs. Howard, that she had such influence over him that he even followed her advice. In one of her answers she recommends a little inconstancy, and says,

"Successful love is very unlike heaven, because you may have success one hour, and lose it the next. Heaven is unchangeable. Who can say so of love? In love there are as many heavens as there are women; so that if a man be so unhappy as to lose one heaven, he need but look for another, instead of throwing himself headlong into hell."

Some of our fine gentlemen about town would say that this is what his lordship has

actually done; or, what is much the same, he is married: for they do say that there is a secret marriage between him and the fair Anastasia. I passed her in his berlin the other day, and just caught a glimpse of very pretty features, with an interesting and sad expression. I believe that she is his wife, because I always believe for the best. This I do for the sake of originality — one likes to do differently to every body else.

I must conclude with a characteristic ejaculation of Lord Portmore—a sort of plaster cast, in bread and milk, of Lord Harvey, who has quite a sect. Lord Portmore is about to build a house. A very fine situation was proposed to him, where he might have a noble view of the ocean; but he started back, with an attitude of terror Betterton might envy, when Hamlet meets his father's ghost, and cried out, — "Oh, Christ! the sea looks so fierce that it frights me!"

And now good night. If they do nothing else, my long letters ought to put you to sleep. Once for all, I make no apologies for their

egotism or their incoherency. The first you will take as a thing of course. Writing to you is thinking on paper; and as to the second, things here happen too fast for me to sort them. You must take my events as I do the ribands from my box — I snatch the first that comes to hand, from not having a moment to choose between them. I fear, however, that I cannot have left you an atom of patience; but still bear with, and love

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.

The deep, the long, the dreaming hours,
  That I have past with thee,
When thou hadst not a single thought
  Of how thou wert with me.

I heard thy voice, I spoke again,
  I gazed upon thy face;
And never scene of actual life
  Could bear a deeper trace

Than all that fancy conjured up,
  And made thee look and say;
Till I have loathed reality,
  That chased such dream away.

Alas! this is vain, fond, and false;
  Thy heart is not for me;
And, knowing this, how can I waste
  My very soul on thee?

I BELIEVE that, to the young, suspense is the most intolerable suffering. Active misery always

brings with it its own power of endurance. What a common expression it is to hear,—"Well, if I had known what I had to go through beforehand, I should never have believed it possible that I could have done it." But it is a dreadful thing to be left alone with your imagination, to have to fancy the worst, and yet not know what that worst may be; and this, in early youth, has a degree of acute anguish that after years cannot know. As we advance in life, we find all things here too utterly worthless to grieve over them as we once could grieve: we grow cold and careless; the dust, to which we are hastening, has entered into the heart.

But no girl of Ethel Churchill's age could hold this "inevitable creed." Hitherto she had thought but little—she had only felt. She loved Norbourne Courtenaye without a doubt, and without a fear. To her it seemed so natural to love him, that his affection appeared a thing of course, the inevitable consequence of her own. A sweet instinct soon told her that she was beloved, and

it wanted no confirmation of words. Words are for the worldly, the witty, the practised; not for the simple, the timid, and the impassioned. It never occurred to her to question of the future: every thing was absorbed in the intense happiness of the present. She saw him go, unfettered by a vow, unbound by aught of promise; yet his change never crossed her mind. She was sad to part with him—very sad; it was the sunshine past from her daily existence: but the sadness was unmixed with fear. He had never said that he would write, yet she fully relied upon his writing; simply because she felt that, in his place, she would have written.

Norbourne was very wrong not to write. True, he was so situated that an explanation was impossible; still a letter would have been a consolation, and she would so readily have believed whatever he had written. He said to himself, "How can I write? what shall I write? It is impossible to tell her on whose sweet face I have gazed till, though the soft eyes were never raised, she knew that I could

not but look; she by whose side I have lingered hours—how can I tell her that I am about to marry another?"

Day by day passed by, and Ethel remained in an uncertainty that grew more and more insupportable. It was sad to mark the change that was passing over her. Her soft colour faded, or else deepened with feverish agitation. Her step, that had been so light, now loitered on its way;

> For nothing like the weary step
> Betrays the weary heart.

She used to bound through the plantations, her eye first caught by one object and then another, gazing round for something to admire and to love. Now she walked slowly, her eyes fixed on the ground, as if, in all the wide fair world, there was nothing to attract nor to interest. She fed her birds carefully still; but she no longer lingered by the cage to watch, nor sought to win their caresses by a playfulness that shewed she was half a child. Now her work dropped on her knee, and her

book fell from her hand; she was perpetually seeking excuses for change of place; and the change brought added discomfort. The sole thing to which she turned with any wish to do, was the frequent visits that she paid to Sir Jasper Meredith.

The restraint that she put upon herself, while with her grandmother, was too much for one so young and unpractised; it was so hard to talk on every subject but the one of which her very soul was full: but going to that kind old man was a relief—it brought its own reward, because it was a kindness. It soothed her to feel that she was of importance to any one; and she was so grateful to Henrietta for her affectionate notes and messages — her friend, at least, had not forgotten her. Moreover, she took a strange pleasure in seeing Sir Jasper Meredith receive letters: it was the heart hovering about the object that was yet consuming it. By degrees their conversations grew more and more interesting. A few weeks before, there would have been nothing in herself that responded

to his gloomy views of humanity; now she felt their truth in her own depression.

The old poet pursued the usual course, when he said,—

> "When I am sad, to sadnesse I applie
> Each leaf, each flower, each herbe, that I passe bye."

Ethel looked on the fair face of nature only to see one image, and she now surrounded it with all the agonies of doubt.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN OLD MAN'S VIEW OF LIFE.

We tremble even in our happiness;
Hurried and dim, the unknown hours press
Heavy with care or grief, that none may ever guess.

The future is more present than the past:
For one look back a thousand on we cast,
And Hope doth ever Memory outlast.

For Hope say Fear — Hope is a timid thing,
Fearful, and weak, and born in suffering;
At least, such Hope as human life can bring.

Its home, it is not here, it looks beyond;
And, while it carries an enchanter's wand,
Its spells are conscious of their earthly bond.

ETHEL used often to go of an evening and pass an hour with Sir Jasper Meredith, who was always glad to see her, and always admitted her into his library. A painter might have taken the scene for some laboratory of the olden time, occupied by an Italian al-

chymist, and one fair child who had grown up, like a dream of human beauty, amid study and seclusion. She was seated on a low seat by the hearth, wrapped still, more from forgetfulness than cold, in her mantle. The fire-light, which was flickering and uncertain, left her figure in complete shade, but threw sudden gleams of radiance on her face. What a change had a few weeks wrought there!

On the moonlit evening which collected our young party together by the little fountain, Ethel was the cherub of the circle — a very dream of child-like, roseate, innocent, loveliness. She had still that peculiar cast of beauty which the immortal artists of Italy have associated with our idea of angelic nature; but it was now that of a seraph, who has both knowledge and pity. The long fair hair was thrown carelessly back, while the gleams of the hearth kindled it like burning gold. This made the paleness of the face more conspicuous, and there was an impress of sadness, terrible to mark in one so young. The attitude — the hands clasped, and the

form drooping carelessly forward — was one of utter dejection. The eye-lashes shone with unshed tears; there was too much uncertainty for the relief of weeping. The large blue eyes were fixed on the fire; dilated and unconscious, they knew not what they saw. Alas! it was too soon with Ethel for the past to engross the spirit, that should have been hopeful and buoyant, so entirely.

"All I hope is," exclaimed Sir Jasper, breaking the silence into which they had gradually sunk,—"that Henrietta will never love. She is guarded against it both by knowledge and ambition. She has not, like most girls, been sedulously kept from considering what is in reality the most important subject they can consider. On the contrary, she has, from the first, been taught to examine and to know the evil which mere selfishness should teach her to shun."

"You think love, then, to be an evil?" asked Ethel, timidly.

"I look upon it," replied the old man, "as

the greatest calamity to which our nature is subject. What is it but having our happiness taken out of our own hands, and delivered, bound and bartered, into that of another."

"But that other," exclaimed Ethel, "may delight in making it more precious than their own."

"The chances are fearfully against it," replied the old man. "Nature and fate rarely accord their old dark variance. You are by the one formed to be beloved, and to love. As all experience shews, the probabilities are, that you will waste the rich treasure of your affection on one who has none to give in return, or who is wholly unworthy of the gift."

"But," persisted his companion, "experience also shews instances of mutual and enduring affection."

"And how Fate prepares the path for Love," returned Sir Jasper, "by surrounding it with every difficulty, by trying it with poverty and by absence, till the worn-out

spirit sinks beneath some last disappointment: but this is an uncommon instance. Mutual and lasting attachment is the rarest shape taken by suffering."

" And the sweetest," said Ethel, in so low a voice as scarcely to be audible.

" But what," continued Meredith, " is the ordinary history of the heart? We yield to some strong and sudden impulse. One sweet face sheds its own loveliness over earth. A subtle pleasure, unknown before, enters into the commonest thing. We gaze on the stars, and dream of an existence spiritual and lovely as their own, far removed from all lower cares, from all the meaner and baser portion of our ordinary path. The face of nature has grown fairer than of old; a thousand graceful phantasies are linked with every leaf and flower. The odour that comes from the violet with the last sobs of a spring shower, is more fragrant from recalling the faint breathing of one beloved mouth. We turn the poet's page, now, to find a thousand hidden meanings, only

to be detected by a passionate sympathy; for poetry is the language set apart for love."

"Ah, how true that is!" exclaimed Ethel, stopping short, and colouring at the idea of betraying that secret which, though the soul's dearest mystery, is never kept from others.

"But this brief abode in fairy-land is dearly purchased," continued Sir Jasper; "too late we find that the dominion of another is an iron rule. We doubt, we fear, we dread, only to be at last—how bitterly—undeceived! We find that truth is a mockery; and confidence but a laying bare of the heart to the beak of the vulture. We are mortified because we have been duped, and that by means of our kindliest affections; hence we grow suspicious. Our feelings are checked, and we are afraid of their indulgence — why give weapons against our own peace? Hence we become cold, doubtful, stern, — how are the elements of happiness departed from us! It is life's first lesson, and its severest; we shall never suffer so bitterly again, because we can never more

know such keen enjoyment: yet this first lesson is but the type of all that are to come. Throughout our weary pilgrimage we are duped and betrayed! One hope after another dies away like a star in the dim chill light of morning and reality. Our feelings are exhausted; our memory stored with images of pain. Our mistress deceived us at first, and our friends have gone and done likewise. Tired and embittered, we take refuge in a harsh indifference; the dust of the highway is upon us, and the heart becomes its own tomb. All the better part of us has gone down to the grave, while we sit wearily by its side, the wan shadows of what once we were. Life, after all its fever and struggle, has only one dark hope left; and that hope, is death!"

The old man's voice sank, like a knell, amid the stillness of that gloomy chamber, and he sank back fatigued in his Gothic seat, the very image of the desolate old age he had painted. While Ethel, who sat cowering by the hearth, was equally the image of youthful

despondency. Both were silent; for the aged man was sad to think of the past, and the young girl trembled to think of the future. A few minutes passed, when both were aroused from their stupor by the entrance of a servant with a letter from Henrietta.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DIFFERENT OPINIONS.

Doubt, despairing, crime, and craft,
Are upon that honied shaft.
It has made the crowned king
Crouch beneath his suffering;
Made the beauty's cheek more pale
Than the foldings of her veil:
Like a child the soldiers kneel,
Who had mocked at flame or steel;
Bade the fires of genius turn
On their own breasts; and there burn,
A wound, a blight, a curse, a doom,
Bowing young hearts to the tomb.
Well may storm be on the sky,
And the waters roll on high,
When that passion passes by:
Earth below, and heaven above,
Well may bend to thee, O Love!

While this conversation was going on between Sir Jasper Meredith and Ethel Churchill, one of almost a similar kind was progressing between the very object of his solicitude and

Lady Mary Wortley. After a day's hard shopping, they had come home laden with bargains, and the dressing-room was strewed with Indian fans, ivory boxes, and lace. They were going to dine *tête-à-tête*, as there was a gay ball in perspective, and they needed a little recruiting. Chloe, who had never forgotten his mistress's brilliant suggestion of the pigmies, exhausted his genius in the slight, but exquisite dinner, which he sent up, and which was, at least, duly appreciated by Lady Mary.

"There is something," exclaimed she, "wanting in the composition of one who can be indifferent to the fascination of such an omelet as this."

"I own," replied Henrietta, "I never care what I eat."

"More shame for you!" returned her companion; "it only shews how little you consider your duty to yourself."

"My duty to myself!" cried Lady Marchmont; "why, that would be

> 'Roots from the earth,
> And water from the spring,'

according to the principles laid down in moral essays."

"Moral essays are only a series of mistakes," interrupted her ladyship: "our first duty to ourselves, is to enjoy ourselves as much as possible. Now, to accomplish that, we must cultivate all our bad qualities: I can assure you I am quite alarmed when I discover any good symptoms."

"You are laughing!" replied her listener.

"I laugh at most things," returned the other; "and that is the reason why people in general do not understand me. A person who wishes to be popular, should never laugh at any thing. A jest startles people from that tranquil dulness in which they love to indulge: they do not like it till age has worn off the joke's edge. Moreover, there is no risk in laughing, if a great many laugh before you venture to laugh too."

"How very true!" exclaimed Henrietta; "there is nothing so little understood as wit."

" People cannot bear," replied her ladyship, " to be expected to understand what, in reality, they do not, and are ashamed to confess: it mortifies their self-love. I am persuaded, if all gay badinage were prefaced by an explanation, it would be infinitely better received."

" Why," said Lady Marchmont, " that would be sending the arrow the wrong way."

" A very common way of doing things in this world," was the answer; " and," she added, " I do not care about being popular: and, indeed, rather like being hated; it gives me an opportunity of using up epigrams which would otherwise be wasted. Our enemies, at least, keep our weapons in play: but for their sake, the sarcasm and the sword would alike rust in the scabbard."

" I care much more for being generally liked than you do," said Henrietta.

" I do not care about it at all," replied Lady Mary; " if I did, I should not say the things that I do: but, next to amusing, I like to astonish."

"I would rather interest," replied Lady Marchmont.

"Shades of the grand Cyrus! that voluminous tome I used to read so devotedly,—your empire is utterly departed from me!" exclaimed her ladyship: "I have long since left romance behind —

> 'Once, and but once, that devil charmed my mind,
> To reason deaf, and observation blind:'

now I look upon my lover as I do my dinner, a thing very agreeable and very necessary, but requiring perpetual change."

"What a simile!" cried Henrietta, with uplifted hands and eyes.

"Believe me, my dear," returned the other, "love is a mixture of vanity and credulity. Now, these are two qualities that I sedulously cultivate; they conduce to our chief enjoyments."

"My definition of love," said the young countess, with a faint sigh, "would be very different to yours."

"Yes," replied Lady Mary, "you have all sorts of fanciful notions on the subject. I know what you would like;—an old place in the country, half ruins, half flowers, with some most picturesque-looking cavalier, who

'Lived but on the light of those sweet eyes!'"

"Well," interrupted Henrietta, "I see nothing so very appalling in such a prospect. How would our thoughts grow together! how would my mind become the image of his! What a world of poetry and of beauty we might create around us! I can imagine no sacrifice in life that would not cheaply buy the happiness of loving and being loved."

"Very fine, and very tiresome," answered the other, with half a yawn and half a sneer. "How weary you would be of each other: to see the same face—to hear the same voice; why, my dear child, I give you one single week, and then,—

'Abandoned by joy, and deserted by grace,
You will hang yourselves both in the very same place!'"

" At least," replied Henrietta, " we should carry on our sympathy to the very last. Though I cannot peculiarly admire its coincidence, I should say,

' Take any shape but that.' "

" If it does not take that," cried Lady Mary, " it will take some other just as bad. Believe me, we are all of us false, vain, selfish, inconstant; and the sooner we cease to look for any thing else, the better: we save ourselves a world of unreasonable expectation, and of bitter disappointment!"

" I would not think like you," replied Lady Marchmont, " not for the treasures of the crowned Ind. I devoutly believe in the divinity of affection; and my ideal of love, is affection in its highest state of enthusiasm and devotion. No sacrifice ever appeared to me great, that was made for its sweet sake."

" The Lord have mercy upon such notions!" cried Lady Mary, throwing herself back in her chair.

Sir Jasper would have been tempted to

re-echo her ejaculation, and he would have been almost right. To love another, is too often the sad, yet sweet seal, put upon a bond of wretchedness, at least to a woman. How is her earnest, her self-sacrificing, her devoted attachment, repaid? — By neglect, falsehood, and desertion!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE END OF DOUBT.

I tell thee death were far more merciful
Than such a blow. It is death to the heart;
Death to its first affections, its sweet hopes;
The young religion of its guileless faith.
Henceforth the well is troubled at the spring;
The waves run clear no longer; there is doubt
To shut out happiness — perpetual shade;
Which, if the sunshine penetrate, 'tis dim,
And broken ere it reach the stream below.

It is strange how we hope, even against hope. The light came into Ethel's eyes, the colour flushed her cheek, when she caught sight of the letter. She believed that it must be for her; and it was with a sick feeling of disappointment that she saw the servant pass by her. I do not think that life has a suspense more sickening than that of expecting a letter which does not come. The hour which brings

the post is the one that is anticipated, the only one from which we reckon. How long the time seems till it comes! With how many devices do we seek to pass it a little quicker! How we hope and believe each day will be our last of anxious waiting! The post comes in, and there is no letter for us. How bitter is the disappointment! and on every repetition it grows more acute. How immeasurable the time seems till the post comes in again! The mind exhausts itself in conjectures; illness, even death, grow terribly distinct to hope in its agony—hope that is fear! We dread we know not what; and every lengthened day the misery grows more insupportable. Every day the anxiety takes a darker shadow. To know even the very worst of all we have foreboded, appears a relief.

The letter which Ethel had watched so eagerly, was the usual one from Henrietta. Her uncle almost snatched it, with hands that trembled with eagerness. His whole face lighted up. He read the direction; he looked at the seal with an expression of even childlike

fondness; he hoarded his enjoyment by delaying to break it. At last he opened the letter: he watched the fair Italian hand with delight. Lady Marchmont's hand-writing was peculiarly fine; often careless, and sometimes illegible, but never to her uncle. Her affectionate remembrance was marked in the care with which she wrote, lest her letters might be troublesome to decipher. He read it at first eagerly; he needed to be assured of her health and happiness; then slowly, lingering over every word; and then, as was his custom, prepared to read it aloud.

In the meantime, Ethel had leant her head on her hand, while the large tears trickled slowly through her fingers. Every day the disappointment grew more insupportable. The sight of another's letter filled her with the bitterest envy. Suffering cannot come unattended with bad feelings. It was in vain that she checked herself; but the question would arise, Why should Henrietta be so much happier than herself? Scarcely could she command her attention when Sir Jasper be-

gan to read. That last evening when they were all together rose with terrible distinctness. The little fountain shone with the falling moonlight, and Henrietta's eyes seemed to grow darker and more intense as they filled with that pure and spiritual ray. Walter Maynard stood beside, pale and dejected; and nearer still leant Norbourne Courtenaye. How well she remembered his tender and earnest gaze, and the small knot of blue harebells on which her own glance fell; when, with sweet shame and pleasure, she looked down, too timid to look upon him. A more solemn and deep conviction of how utterly she loved him seemed to strike upon her heart. She started, for she heard his name; his name that, saving from her own lips, whispered in the stillness of midnight, she had not heard since his departure. Quietly, even carelessly, Sir Jasper was reading the following passage from Lady Marchmont's letter:—

"Do you remember a young man called Norbourne Courtenaye, who was staying at Churchill Manor? He has just married his

cousin, Lord Norbourne's daughter. It is a splendid match. I thought him *épris* with our pretty Ethel, but the present marriage is quite one of interest. They are just now keeping the honeymoon: but, with such an heiress! I say that it ought to be called the harvest-moon!"

Ethel started to her feet, the rich flush that had covered her cheek at the first mention of his name died into deadly paleness. The dew started on her forehead, and her eyes dilated with a wild, strange expression; their very blue seemed curdled and glazed. She snatched the letter from Sir Jasper, who started as her icy hand touched his: she attempted to read the passage herself, but the letters seemed to swim before her gaze: they turned to fire; the paper dropped from her grasp; a thick mist appeared to gather over the room; she gave a convulsive shudder, and dropped on the floor perfectly insensible.

It would have spared her a world of wretchedness, had she never recovered from that death-like trance. Truly did the ancients say,

"Those whom the gods love, die young!" The flowers fall from the hand unwithered; the eyes close in the sunshine; they go down to the grave as if it were an altar, in their hour of hope and of beauty: they are spared life's longest agony — that of endurance, and endurance without expectation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONFIDENCE.

I feel the presence of my own despair;
It darkens round me palpable and vast.
I gave my heart unconsciously; it filled
With love as flowers are filled with early dew,
And with the light of morning.

* * * * *

If he be false, he who appeared so true,
Can there be any further truth in life,
When falsehood wears such seeming?

Sir Jasper started from his seat; absorbed in his letter, he had not perceived the alteration in Ethel's face, and the noise of her fall was the first thing that drew his attention. At once he felt what was the cause — the marriage he had so unconsciously communicated — and he stood for an instant lost in thought. But he was too much of a chymist not to have remedies at hand, and he raised the inanimate

form tenderly, as if it had been his own beloved child, and laid her on the couch. A few minutes sufficed to restore her to life, and also to consciousness. Slowly her scattered senses returned; she gazed on Sir Jasper, but her eye wandered round with an unsatisfied gaze; at last it rested on the letter, which had fallen on the ground.

"It is all true," muttered she, with a faint shudder. She pressed her hands firmly together, but the effort was vain, and she burst into a violent flood of tears. "Forgive me," she exclaimed, "I ought to wait till I get home; but I am wretched, very wretched."

The kind old man did not even attempt to speak; he knew too well the vanity of consolation, to mock her with it; but he took her hand gently, and his own eyes glittered with unusual moisture. An hour before, or an hour after, and Ethel would have locked her secret deep in her inmost heart; but now misery mastered timidity, and it was a relief to speak. Moreover, there was such encouragement in Sir Jasper's gentle and voiceless sympathy.

"I am sure that he did love me," exclaimed she: "young as I am, my heart tells me the truth. Ah, no, it has deceived me! There is no truth in any thing."

"Were you, then, engaged to Mr. Courtenaye?" said Sir Jasper, who asked the question solely to give her an opportunity of expressing the emotion it was too much to restrain.

"He told me he loved me," replied Ethel, in a tone of hopeless dejection, which went to her companion's heart.

"My poor child," said he, "I can urge nothing to comfort you. It will not soften your suffering to know how common it is."

"Common!" exclaimed she.

"Ay, common — too common. Life has many dreams; all sweet, and all fugitive; but love is the sweetest and most fugitive of all. I know nothing of Mr. Courtenaye; but I can perceive enough of this affair to see that he is one of those who, for a moment's selfish gratification, or for the yet meaner love of gratified vanity, will excite the deepest feelings,

and trifle with the dearest hopes of all who trust them!"

"It is not possible!" said his listener, almost inaudibly, as Norbourne's open brow, and simple, yet earnest manner, arose on her recollection. His falsehood was too evident, yet she could not bear to hear another say it. It seemed as if she had scarcely believed it, till confirmed by Sir Jasper. All in her mind was confusion; still the paramount sense that predominated over all others, was the bitter conviction of his unworthiness. Any thing but that she could have borne; but to find realised in him all she had ever heard of man's crime and cruelty, darkened the whole world: all belief in goodness had suddenly departed. Still, till Sir Jasper spoke, she felt rather as if labouring under a frightful dream than conscious of a frightful reality. She remained for a few moments in gloomy silence, when the entrance of a servant, with wood for the fire, roused her from her stupor. How strangely do the common domestic events, things of constant and hourly recurrence, jar upon the

over-excited nerves! It seems to mock our inward misery to see all but the pulses of our own beating heart, go on so calmly and uniformly. There is an exaggeration in sorrow, which would fain demand universal sympathy: it does not find it, and the sorrow sinks the deeper.

"I am very late," exclaimed Ethel, starting up, and drawing her hood over her face: "dear, dear sir, I will thank you for your kindness to-morrow."

"God bless you, my poor child; but will you take a servant with you—you are not well enough to go home by yourself?"

"I am better alone: it is not five minutes' walk," said Ethel, eagerly.

Sir Jasper let her depart without further remonstrance; he sympathised with the feverish mood that craved the indulgence of solitude; he knew its worth. Ethel hurried along the well-known path, haunted by so many remembrances. She started from them: she felt as if she must drop, did she pause for a single moment. Never had she made such

haste before; and yet it seemed an age before she gained her little chamber; once there, she flung herself on her bed, and gave way to the sorrow with which she no longer struggled. Who among you has not felt the relief that it is, after constraint on some overwhelming misery, to reach the loneliness of your own room, and there yield to the passionate weeping you cannot repress? Ethel was very young, and unaccustomed to grief; her feelings were in all their first freshness; and to such, forgetfulness seems impossible: but the body sinks under the mind, and nature can endure but a portion of suffering. Ethel cried like a child; and, like a child, cried herself to sleep.

There was a strange contrast between that cheerful chamber and its occupant. Every thing around denoted quiet, comfort, and glad and innocent tastes: the walls were of white wainscot, and hung with drawings; book-shelves fastened with rose-coloured riband, and in two recesses were stands of old china, where shepherds, shepherdesses, and sheep, predominated. An open spinnet was in one corner,

and in the other an embroidery-frame, whose half-finished flowers spoke of recent employment. In each of the windows was a beaupot, and the roses were fresh, as if still on their native bough; and in one of the window-seats was a volume of Sir Philip Sydney's "Arcadia:" a few myrtle-leaves were scattered on the yet unclosed page, a graceful mark to find the place where the youthful reader had brooded over visions of truth and love, already vanished, like the freshness of those leaves, strewed, as if they were flung on the shroud of departed hope.

The casements were open, and looked on one of the fairest aspects of the garden; and the murmur of branches brought a sense of repose, and a faint perfume that grew every moment sweeter. The sun had set, and a soft purple haze clothed the distance; but a few rosy tints yet floated on the horizon, far from the colourless moon, whose pale crescent, pure and lucid as pearl, had just arisen: one single star was on the sky, tremulous and clear, belonging to other worlds—

ah, surely, less troubled than ours! It rose just above where Ethel was sleeping, the only agitated thing in all that fair and calm scene: she lay with her head on her arm, and tears

> Seemed but the natural melting of its snow,

as the flushed cheek pressed upon it. Her long bright tresses had escaped from all confinement, and lay around her in rich confused masses, but giving that air of desolation which nothing marks in a woman so strongly as her neglected hair. Her eyes were closed, but the soft eyelids were swelled and red, and the eyelashes yet glittered with tears; a spot of burning red was on either cheek, but the rest of the face was pale; and, even in slumber, the muscles of the mouth quivered. Her breathing was difficult—how unlike its usual hushed and regular sweetness — while every now and then her whole frame was shaken by a quick convulsive sob. Terrible, indeed, is such sleep; but more terrible its awaking. At first we rouse forgetful; but conscious of something, we know not what. The head is raised with

a sudden start, only to drop heavily on the pillow from whence rest is banished in an instant. The eyes close again, but not to sleep; we seek only to shut out the light from which we sicken. But the inward sorrow rises only the more distinct: all is remembered, not a pang is spared; and the very rest given to the body only renders its sense of suffering more acute. Misery has many bitter moments; but, I believe, the first awakening after any great sorrow is the one of its most utter agony. How will it ever be possible to get through the long, the coming day? I envy those who have never asked the question.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN EVENING ALONE.

The steps of Fate are dark and terrible;
And not here may we trace them to the goal.
  If I could doubt the heaven in which I hope,
The doubt would vanish, gazing upon life,
And seeing what it needs of peace and rest.
  Life is but like a journey during night.
We toil through gloomy paths of the unknown;
Heavy the footsteps are with pitfalls round;
And few and faint the stars that guide our way:
But, at the last, comes morning; glorious
Shines forth the light of day, and so will shine
The heaven which is our future and our home.

Sir Jasper watched from his window the light form of Ethel, as she ran hastily along the little winding path, soon lost in the coppice beside. "Poor child!" muttered he, resuming his seat, and gazing on the wood embers, whose flames were gathering into all sorts of fantastic shapes, which only ask the imagination to

give them what form it will. I marvel at none of the wild beliefs in the Hartz mountains: fire is the element of the spiritual, and who can tell what strange visitings there may be during the midnight hours that the charcoal-burner sits watching the fitful and subtle mystery of flame?

Sir Jasper gazed on these grotesque combinations till their shadows seemed almost palpable upon his wearied spirits. He felt himself growing fanciful and superstitious; a pale, sad face, wearing first the likeness of Ethel, and then changing to that of Henrietta, but fixed and distorted, appeared distinct in the obscurity. The large eyes sought his own, as if asking for help, and yet unable to do more than look their mute asking. Funeral pageants floated on the air, dark, vague, but terrible, with that white face predominant in all.

Sir Jasper started from his chair, ashamed of the sick fancies that had, for the moment, overmastered him. He approached the window to dissipate them in the fair face of heaven: the evening had closed in during his reverie,

and the sweet and silver night had stolen, with her noiseless steps, upon the air. The scene was usually bare and desolate, but it was now softened by the united influence of summer and of moonlight. There was not a cloud on the sky, save a few light vapours that congregated near the moon; but even they were lustrous with her presence. The herbage shone with silver dews, like a sheet of water tremulous with the passing wind, and not a leaf on the surrounding trees but seemed the mirror of a ray; all around was silent as sleep, and as soft. It seemed a world on which shadow had never rested, and tumult had never disturbed; crime, rage, and grief, had no part in elements so lovingly blended; the earth was at rest, and the still bright air slept on her bosom.

But there was something in the tranquillity that mocked Sir Jasper's unrest: the contrast was too forcible between the outward and inward world: the one so serene, so spiritual; the other so troubled, and so actual. He turned from the window; and, ringing the bell hastily, ordered the servants to close the curtains.

"If," muttered he to himself, "every place bore record of the wretchedness that they had witnessed, they could not thus mock us with their bright and serene aspect. Folly, of that dreaming creed of old, to believe that the calm, far stars, governed the base destinies of earth! But the world was young then — warm with the celestial fire that called it into being. Imagination walked its fresh paths even as a god, and shed around glorious beliefs and divine aspirings: its presence made beautiful the planet that it redeemed with its heavenly essence: but the imagination has exhausted its poetry; we are given over, worn out, and yet struggling to the cold and the real. We know more than we did, but we love less; and what knowledge is to be acquired on our weary soil but the knowledge of evil? I look around, and see nothing but suffering: mankind is divided into two classes, in which all alternately take their place — the tyrant and the victim. How we torture each other! Not content with our inevitable portion, with sickness, toil, and death, we must create and inflict sorrow!"

At this moment his eye fell upon some roses that Miss Churchill had brought him: in the confusion they had been thrown upon the floor, and trampled upon.

"Just emblems of herself, poor girl," said the kind old man: "a passing wind from the south, a transitory gleam of sunshine, and, lo! those flowers opened to their short and sweet existence! Now, there they lie, carelessly crushed; the little period allotted to their loveliness and fragrance recklessly shortened: and such is the history of that poor child. Her young heart has been awakened to its short summer of hope and love: and how dreary a winter remains behind! She has lost much more than her lover; she has lost confidence in affection, and belief in excellence. Alas for the heart which has surrendered itself to an idol unworthy of its faith!—it has no future.

"And yet," continued he, after a pause, "it matters little in what shape our sorrow overtakes us. In all this wide world there is nothing but suffering: the child cries in its cradle; it but begins as it will continue. In all ranks there

is the same overpowering misery: the poor man has all the higher faculties of his being absorbed in a perpetual struggle with cold and hunger: a step higher, and pretence comes to aggravate poverty; dig we cannot, and to beg we are ashamed. Go on into what are called the higher classes, and there we find ambition the fever of the soul, and jealousy its canker. There are pleasures; but there is no relish for them: and luxuries which have become wearisome as wants. The feelings are either dull in selfish apathy, that excludes enjoyment; or unduly keen, till a look or word is torture. Then your philosophers, your poets, your men of science — what do they do but spend breathing and healthful life on wasting pursuits, in which the very success only shews how worthless it is to succeed? The mind feeds upon the body: pale sickness, and early decrepitude, overmaster even its spiritual essence. Too late it discovers that this earth is its prison, and not its home: the heart beats, and its pulses are the clockwork of wretchedness: the head examines only to find that all

is void and worthless. We feel, and all we feel is misery; we know, and the whole of our knowledge is evil. In one thing has Fate been merciful,—it has placed at the end of our pilgrimage a grave."

Sir Jasper was right; in a few short years we learn that the "valley of the shadow of death" does but lead to a place of peace, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Rest!—how strongly, day by day, does the desire for rest grow upon the human heart! We begin life—how buoyant, how hopeful! difficulties but bring out a healthful exertion, and obstacles stimulate by the resources they call into action. This cannot, and does not last: it is not lassitude so much as discouragement that gains upon us: we feel how little we have done of all we once thought that we could do; and still more, how little that we have done has answered its intention. This I believe to be experienced in every career; but more especially in a literary one. Necessarily dependent on imagination, feeling, and opinion, of how exhausting a

nature is both the work and the appeal of literature! Let the successful writer look back a few years, and what an utter sense of desolation there will be in the retrospect! Not a volume but has been the burial-place of many hopes, and the graven record of feelings never to be known again.

How constantly has mortification accompanied triumph! With what secret sorrow has that praise been received from strangers, denied to us by our friends! Nothing astonishes me more than the envy which attends literary fame, and the unkindly depreciation which waits upon the writer: of every species of fame, it is the most ideal and apart; it would seem to interfere with no one. It is bought by a life of labour; generally, also, of seclusion and privation. It asks its honour only from all that is most touching, and most elevated in humanity. What is the reward that it craves?—to lighten many a solitary hour, and to spiritualise a world, that were else too material. What is the requital that

the Athenians of the earth give to those who have struggled through the stormy water, and the dark night, for their applause?—both reproach and scorn. If the author have — and why should he be exempt from?—the faults of his kind, with what greedy readiness are they seized upon and exaggerated! How ready is the sneer against his weakness or his error! What hours of feverish misery have been past! What bitter tears have been shed over the unjust censure, and the personal sarcasm!

The imaginative feel such wrong far beyond what those of less sensitive temperament can dream. The very essence of a poetical mind is irritable, passionate, and yet tender, susceptible, and keenly alive to that opinion which is the element of its existence. These may be faults; but they are faults by which themselves suffer most, and without which they could not produce their creations. Can you bid the leopard leave his spots, and yet be beautiful?

Perhaps, — for the Divine purpose runs

through every aim of our being,—the disappointment and the endurance are but sent to raise those hopes above, which else might cling too fondly to their fruition below. Sooner or later dawns upon us the conviction, that the gifts we hold most glorious were given for a higher object than personal enjoyment, or the praise which is of man. We learn to look at the future result, to acknowledge our moral responsibility, and to hope that our thoughts, destined to become part of the human mind, will worthily fulfil the lofty duty assigned to their exercise.

I agree with Sir Jasper in looking forward with a desire that would fain "take the wings of the morning, and flee away, and be at rest." Worn, weary, and discouraged, the image of death seems like a pleasant sleep -- solemn, but soothing; when all that now makes the fevered heart beat with unquiet pain will be no more. But I, also, gaze beyond, in all the earnest humility of hope. I believe that the mind is imperishable; and is also the worthiest

offering to the Creator. Whatever of thought, of feeling, or of faculties, I may ever have possessed, look to the grave as to an altar, from whence they will arise purified and exalted unto heaven.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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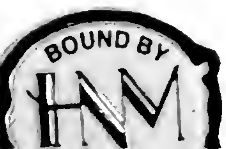
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